

COVID-19 mRNA Vaccine Information for Children six months to four years old

Public Health - Factsheet for
Parents and Guardians

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Manitoba 

Immunization is one of the most important accomplishments in public health. Over the past 50 years, immunization has led to the elimination, containment and control of diseases that were once very common in Canada.¹ Vaccines help our immune system recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause diseases.

The COVID-19 mRNA vaccine is given by injection (needle). Information in this factsheet is about the **Moderna/Spikevax™ COVID-19 vaccine and the Pfizer/Comirnaty™ COVID-19 vaccine** primary series and is for children six months to four years of age.

COVID-19 vaccine recommendations are different for children who are moderately to severely immunocompromised. If your child is moderately to severely immunocompromised due to disease (e.g., organ transplant, leukemia) or treatment (e.g., chemotherapy, high-dose steroids), or has an autoimmune condition, please refer to the factsheet titled, "COVID-19 Vaccine: Information for Individuals who have an autoimmune condition and/or are immunocompromised" available at manitoba.ca/covid19/vaccine/resources.html.

Are mRNA vaccines safe in the pediatric population?

Yes, they are safe. The recent vaccine trials showed that participants tolerated the vaccine well. Data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines will continue to be monitored (i.e., real world use) to detect and respond to potential safety signals that may arise.

As with other vaccines and medicines, some children may experience adverse reactions or side effects. Most side effects are not serious and should go away on their own within a day or two after getting the vaccine.

The risk of rare or very rare side effects, including myocarditis/pericarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle/lining around the heart) is unknown at this time. However, current data suggests that the risk of myocarditis/pericarditis in younger children is lower than adolescents and young adults. For more information on myocarditis and pericarditis, see manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/covid/covid19_vaccine_factsheet.pdf.

Speak to your health care provider if you have any questions about your child's individual risks and benefits of receiving the vaccine.

Does COVID-19 affect young children?

Children of all ages have been affected throughout the pandemic as they have experienced disruptions to their normal social activities.

Most children who get COVID-19 have no symptoms or experience only mild symptoms. Some, including healthy children, experience complications and require hospitalization.

Children with underlying medical conditions may be at an increased risk of experiencing serious illness.

Children who have been infected with COVID-19 are at risk of Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C), a rare but serious complication of COVID-19 infection. Children with MIS-C usually require admission to hospital.

Although evidence is limited, children age six months to five years may experience symptoms consistent with post-COVID-19 condition (also referred to as long COVID). While it appears that children have a lower risk of post-COVID-19 condition compared to adults, research is ongoing about the frequency and severity of post-COVID-19 condition in children.

Up-to-date data on COVID-19 infections in Manitoba is available at manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/surveillance/covid-19/index.html.

¹ The Public Health Agency of Canada

Is the COVID-19 vaccine for children six months to four years of age the same as the COVID-19 vaccines given to older children?

Generally speaking, yes. The Pfizer/Comirnaty™ and Moderna/Spikevax™ vaccines used for younger children have a lower dose than the vaccine dose given to older children. The primary series for children six months to four years of age is slightly different. There are three doses required to complete the primary series with Pfizer/Comirnaty™ and two doses required to complete the primary series with Moderna/Spikevax™.

Who should get the Moderna/Spikevax™ or Pfizer/Comirnaty™ COVID-19 vaccines?

Vaccines help prepare the body to fight potential future exposure to COVID-19 by getting a child's immune system ready.

The vaccine helps to protect your child and family as well as people in your community. Information on eligibility criteria is available at manitoba.ca/covid19/vaccine/eligibility-criteria.html

Children with a chronic medical condition or living with a weakened immune system can get the vaccine. These children are at increased risk of experiencing serious illness if they get COVID-19.

Booster doses are not available for this age group at this time.

Who should NOT get the mRNA vaccine?

- Children who experienced myocarditis/pericarditis after the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine
- People with children who have a history of myocarditis unrelated to COVID-19 vaccine should consult their clinical team prior to vaccination. This is a precautionary measure until more information is available. People who would prefer not to wait for their child to get their second dose should talk to their immunizer or health care provider about the risks and benefits of proceeding with vaccination.
- Children with a history of Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) until clinical recovery or until 90 days since diagnosis, whichever is longer.
- Children who are allergic to an active substance or any ingredient of the COVID-19 vaccine OR had a severe allergic reaction after their first dose.

Your child would need an allergy referral before vaccination.

There are two ingredients in the mRNA vaccines that are potential allergens known to cause possible allergic reactions, including serious reactions:

1. Polyethylene glycol (PEG) may be found in a multitude of products including bowel preparation products for colonoscopies, laxatives, cough syrup, cosmetics, contact lens care solutions, skin care products, specific medications and as an additive in some food and drinks. Children with PEG allergies may also be allergic to polysorbate 80.
2. Tromethamine (trometamol or Tris) may be found in certain medications.

For information about any of the COVID-19 vaccine ingredients, please review the vaccine manufacturer's product monograph at manitoba.ca/covid19/vaccine/resources.html or speak with your child's immunizer or health care provider.

Your child can be immunized if they have allergies not related to the vaccine, such as allergies to foods, medications, insect stings or seasonal/environmental allergies. Talk to your child's immunizer or health care provider about all of their allergies before vaccination.

It is recommended that children with a fever or other symptoms that could be due to COVID-19, or who have been infected with COVID-19 wait eight weeks after infection (from the start of symptoms or the date of their positive test) before getting a next dose of vaccine. Children who are moderately to severely

immunocompromised may use a shorter interval (i.e., four to eight weeks). But at a minimum, they need to wait until their symptoms are gone and the recommended isolation period is over.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI)² recommends that the Moderna/Spikevax™ and Pfizer/Comirnaty™ COVID-19 vaccines should not routinely be given at the same time or day as other childhood vaccines. It is recommended to wait 14 days before your child receives or gets another vaccine.

NACI recognizes that there may be individual circumstances when the 14-day waiting period can be shortened. Please speak to your health care provider or immunizer if your child is already scheduled or has received other childhood vaccines before or getting their COVID-19 vaccine.

What are the possible side effects of the mRNA vaccine?

In general, the side effects observed during the clinical trials were similar to other vaccines. The side effects were generally mild or moderate, and went away a few days after vaccination. They included things like:

- pain, redness and swelling at the site of injection
- irritability and crying
- sleepiness
- fever
- loss of appetite

These are common side effects of the vaccine and are not a risk to your child's health. Over-the-counter medicines like acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g., Advil®) may be considered to help manage these adverse events (like pain or fever, respectively), if they occur after vaccination.

Acetylsalicylic Acid (e.g., Aspirin®) should NEVER be given to children because it can cause a severe liver and brain disease called Reye's Syndrome.

As with all vaccines, more serious side effects are possible. However, these are rare.

Allergic reactions generally happen shortly after the vaccine is administered. **That is why all children, teens and adults are routinely observed for a minimum of 15 minutes after immunization.** Your child may need to stay in the clinic for 30 minutes if they have had a serious allergic reaction to a vaccine in the past. This can include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. Very rarely, this can happen hours after getting vaccinated. **If this happens after you and your child leave the immunization clinic, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department or health centre for immediate attention.**

Report any serious or unexpected adverse reactions to a health care provider, or call Health Links-Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 (toll free in Manitoba).

For a full list of possible side effects, please review the vaccine manufacturer's product monograph at manitoba.ca/vaccine or speak with your immunizer or health care provider.

Your child's record of protection

All immunizations, including the COVID-19 vaccine, are recorded on your child's immunization record in Manitoba's immunization registry. This registry:

- allows health care providers to find out which immunizations your child has received or needs to have
- may be used to produce immunization records or notify you or your health care provider if a particular immunization has been missed
- allows Manitoba Health as well as public health officials to monitor how well vaccines work in preventing disease

² NACI is an independent committee of recognized experts that provides informed advice on the use of vaccines in Canada. After Health Canada approves a vaccine, NACI critically evaluates all available evidence to make recommendations about its optimal use.

The Personal Health Information Act protects your child's information and the information for any people you provide care for. You can choose to have this personal health information hidden from health care providers. For additional information, please contact your local public health office or speak with a health care provider.

For information and to obtain your child's Manitoba Immunization Card, Manitoba immunization record or Pan-Canadian Proof of Vaccination Credential (PVC), go to manitoba.ca/covid19/vaccine/immunization_record/residents.html.

Where can I find more information?

For more information about COVID-19 or the COVID-19 vaccines, talk to your health care provider. You can also call Health Links – Info Santé in Winnipeg at **204-788-8200** or **1-888-315-9257** (toll free in Manitoba).

Or visit:

Province of Manitoba: manitoba.ca/covid19/index.html

Government of Canada: canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html
