

COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 6 months to under 5 years

July 22, 2022

On July 14, 2022, [Health Canada](#) approved the Moderna vaccine (25 mcg) for children 6 months to 5 years old. In Ontario, [starting Thursday, July 28, 2022](#), parents and caregivers will be able to book appointments for children aged 6 months to under 5.

For every parent, the decision of whether to vaccinate their young child is a personal one, informed by current knowledge of benefits and risks. The OCFP has compiled answers to common questions based on statements from [NACI](#) and the [Canadian Paediatric Society](#) (CPS).

1) What's the benefit of vaccination in this age group?

While most children with COVID-19 have mild symptoms, some children get severe disease and require hospitalization.

- Ontario data show that preschoolers are currently at increased risk of illness [requiring hospitalization](#) than school-aged children.
- For children 6 months to 4 years of age, the average monthly rate of hospitalization due to COVID-19 increased from 1.4 to 15.9 per 100,000, comparing March 1, 2020 - December 31, 2021 to January 1, 2022 – March 31, 2022 in 6 Canadian jurisdictions [source: [NACI](#) statement, July 14, page 5].
- Although rare, multi-inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) is a serious condition associated with COVID-19. See page 5 [here](#).
- Children ≤5 years of age with any comorbidity may have an increased risk for severe COVID-19 outcomes. Risk factors may include low birth weight, cardiovascular and respiratory conditions, medications that affect the immune system, among others. See page 6 [here](#).

Data from older children and teens shows that vaccines lower the risk of complications from COVID-19, and the 2-dose Moderna vaccine series is expected to have comparable effectiveness in preventing severe disease in children 6 months to 5 years old.

- The CPS notes trial data showing [vaccine efficacy against symptomatic COVID-19 infection](#), “starting 14 days after dose 2 was 50.6% for children aged 6 to 23 months, and 36.5% for those aged 2 to 5 years.
- *Efficacy against severe disease could not be determined because there were no severe cases in the vaccinated group and only one case (of MIS-C) in the placebo group.*”

2) Is there concern for myocarditis in children aged 6 months to under 5?

There were no cases of myocarditis in the clinical trials for the Moderna vaccine and according to [NACI](#) (page 11), data suggests the risk of myocarditis and/or pericarditis in younger children is lower than that of adolescents or young adults.

For more on vaccine side effects in the trial, see [Appendix A of the NACI report](#).

3) What are some of the considerations in counselling parents about vaccinating their child under 5 now?

Parents may decide to vaccinate their child if:

- the child has an underlying health condition and may be at increased risk for more severe disease
- there is a high prevalence or increasing transmission of COVID-19 in their community
- the child is in regular contact with a lot of people (e.g., attends daycare)
- the child will be in close contact with someone who is immunocompromised

Source: [Addendum to Canadian Paediatric Society Position Statement, July 19, 2022](#)

4) How are appointments booked for the paediatric COVID-19 vaccine? Where can parents/caregivers reach out with questions?

Starting Thursday, July 28, appointments will be available through: 1) the [COVID-19 vaccination portal](#) and the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre (1-833-943-3900); 2) directly through [public health units](#) using their own booking system; 3) participating primary care providers and paediatricians; 4) [participating pharmacies](#) and Indigenous-led vaccination clinics.

Parents and caregivers with questions are encouraged to speak with their health care provider or call the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre (1-833-943-3900) to speak to a health specialist, or visit [COVID-19 Vaccine Consult Service](#) to book a confidential phone appointment with a SickKids Registered Nurse.

5) What are the recommended dosages and the interval between doses?

Children aged 6 months to under 5 years old will receive the paediatric Moderna COVID-19 vaccine which is a slightly modified, lower dose (half the amount given to children aged 6 to 11), in a two-dose series at a [recommended interval of eight weeks](#) between first and second doses.

For children in this age group who are [moderately to severely immunocompromised](#), the primary series is three doses and interval between doses may be 4 to 8 weeks.

You can read more about timing of COVID-19 vaccines for young children [here](#).

6) How long after a COVID-19 infection should the first vaccine be given?

NACI suggests waiting 8 weeks after the start of symptoms or a positive COVID-19 test before starting or continuing a primary vaccine series for children in these age groups. This interval may be shortened to 4 weeks for children who are moderately to severely immunocompromised.

7) Can the COVID-19 vaccine be given at the same time as other vaccines to children 6 months to under 5 years old?

[NACI](#) does not “routinely” recommend concurrent administration of the vaccine and advises waiting 14 days between the COVID-19 vaccine and another vaccine for this age group, acknowledging the importance for children to catch up on routine vaccinations. The CPS recommends offering the COVID-19 vaccine simultaneously with other required or routine vaccines, “unless there is assurance that timely administration of the other vaccines will not be compromised.”