



Children & Youth with Special Health Care Needs



www.doh.wa.gov/cyshcn

COVID-19 Vaccine Information

Information for caregivers

- Vaccination is especially important for children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) because they have a higher risk of getting sick with COVID-19. This is because they have underlying health conditions. They may also have trouble wearing masks, washing their hands, and keeping a safe distance from others.
- The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is authorized for people 6 months through 11 years old. It is fully approved (under the name Comirnaty) for individuals ages 12 years and older.
- The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine is authorized for people ages 6 months and older.
- The Novavax COVID-19 vaccine is available for people ages 12 years and older.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend the COVID-19 vaccination for everyone 6 months and older.
- The vaccine is very safe and effective for protecting children and youth from COVID-19.

Why should children get vaccinated?

- Getting vaccinated helps keep children safe while at school and with friends and family. Children who are vaccinated will be much less likely to get seriously ill, be hospitalized, or die if they get COVID-19.
- Children who are infected with COVID-19 can develop [short- and long-term health complications](#), including “long COVID-19.” Some complications, like [multisystem inflammatory syndrome \(MIS-C\)](#), can be serious and lead to hospitalization and even death. Vaccination is the best way to keep children healthy and safe.

CYSHCN may be at higher risk of severe COVID-19 illness

- Children with special health care needs or [certain medical conditions](#) may be more likely to get severely ill if they get COVID-19. Vaccination is a critical way to protect children from COVID-19.
- Another way to protect children is to ensure that others in their household are up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines. That means it is important for parents and caregivers to get vaccinated, too.

The COVID-19 vaccine is safe for CYSHCN

- Children and adults with underlying medical conditions can get a COVID-19 vaccine.
- The only reason a person should not get the vaccine is if they have had a life-threatening reaction (a reaction that requires an epi pen) to any of the [ingredients in the COVID-19 vaccine](#).
- The benefits of vaccination far outweigh the risks of getting COVID-19.
- Talk to your child's health care provider if you have questions or concerns about the vaccine.

Side effects

The health risks of getting infected with COVID-19 are much higher than the risk of vaccine side effects. It is normal for children to feel some side effects after getting vaccinated. The most common side effects are:

- A sore arm
- Muscle aches
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Fever
- Chills

Ask your child's health care provider how to make your child more comfortable if they have side effects. You can also make them comfortable with quiet activities. Most side effects go away within one to two days.

If your child has had a severe allergic reaction to other vaccines, they may still be able to get the COVID-19 vaccine. The health care provider will ask them to wait about 30 minutes after the shot to watch for any immediate reactions.

The risk of having a serious reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine is very low. The risk of developing serious symptoms after a COVID-19 infection is much higher than the risk of developing serious side effects after the vaccine. [Learn more about potential serious side effects of COVID-19 vaccination here.](#)

If you experience a medical emergency after getting the COVID-19 vaccine, call 9-1-1 immediately.

How do I get my child vaccinated?

Ask your pediatrician if they carry the COVID-19 vaccine. If not, you can use our [Vaccine Locator](#).

Requesting accommodations

When you make an appointment or arrive at the vaccination site, let the staff know if your child needs some extra help. For example, maybe they are unable to wear a mask or sit and wait after the vaccine. Perhaps bright lights and noisy rooms bother them. You can ask for accommodations such as:

- Walking around after the vaccine instead of sitting.
- Having the provider vaccinate your child in your car.
- Having your child's favorite companion stay with them during the appointment.
- Getting your child vaccinated in a quiet room away from crowds.

If your child has challenges leaving home, connect to a [mobile vaccination team](#) to have your child vaccinated at home.

Where can I find more information?

For the latest information on vaccinating youth for COVID-19, visit [VaccinateWA.org/Kids](#).

Other resources:

- Guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics on [Caring for CYSHCN During the Pandemic](#).
- [COVID-19 Resources for CYSHCN](#) from the Lucile Packard Foundation.
- [COVID-19 Information and Support](#) from Informing Families.
- The Department of Health's [COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Card](#) and the Center for Dignity in Healthcare for People with Disabilities' [Social Story](#) can help communication with the child or youth about the vaccine.
- The BLIND COVID Access phone line (360-947-3330) allows blind and low-vision people to ask questions about access to resources related to COVID-19. [BLINDCOVID.com](#) will host additional resources and communication on vaccination testing, vaccine sites, and navigating daily life in the pandemic.
- For CYSHCN specific questions, please email cyshcn@doh.wa.gov.

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