

COVID-19 Vaccine for Youth with Special Needs or Disabilities: Information for Caregivers

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends everyone 6 months of age and older stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccination. COVID-19 vaccine is especially important for children who are under 2 years of age, have chronic health conditions, have weakened immune systems, live in long-term care facilities or other congregate settings, or have never been vaccinated against COVID-19.

Because children and youth with specialized health needs and disabilities may be at higher risk for more severe illness from COVID-19, families and caregivers are asked to strongly consider vaccinating children with any underlying health condition or disability. Children with underlying medical conditions can receive a COVID-19 vaccine. A person should not receive the vaccine 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.

For more information on COVID-19 vaccines recommendations, visit [AAP: COVID-19 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions \(www.aap.org/en/patient-care/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine-frequently-asked-questions/\)](https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine-frequently-asked-questions/).

What is in the vaccine?

The health care provider giving the vaccine can provide you with information on what ingredients are in the vaccine you or your child will receive and answer any questions about allergies. None of the vaccine products for any age group contain eggs, preservatives, or latex.

Common side effects

Similar to other routine immunizations, some people have side effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Side effects usually last one or two days and usually do not prevent the person from participating in daily activities. After getting the COVID-19 vaccine a person may have:

- A sore arm
- Muscle aches
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Fever/chills

Youth may have these side effects after vaccination that make them uncomfortable, but there are steps you can take to help them feel better, like giving them non-aspirin pain relievers (Tylenol or Ibuprofen) or making them comfortable with quiet activities. If you have serious side effects, go to a hospital, or call 911.

Potential concerns

- **History of allergies:** Children with more severe allergies to things not listed above usually do not have a problem with the COVID-19 vaccine. They will be asked to wait about 30 minutes after the shot to monitor symptoms.
- **Myocarditis and pericarditis (heart inflammation):** CDC has received reports of myocarditis and pericarditis in teens and young adults after the Pfizer, Moderna, and Novavax vaccines. It is more common among males. This rare condition does not appear to be linked to any underlying health conditions. Most cases have been mild and are treatable. The known benefits of COVID-19 vaccination far outweigh the risks. Learn more at [Children's Hospital of Philadelphia: Myocarditis and COVID-19: Get the Facts \(www.chop.edu/news/health-tip/myocarditis-and-covid-19-get-facts\)](https://www.chop.edu/news/health-tip/myocarditis-and-covid-19-get-facts).

Requesting accommodations

When you make an appointment or arrive at the vaccine site, make sure you let the staff know that the child in your care might need some extra help. For example, perhaps bright lights and noisy rooms bother them and they are unable to sit and wait after the shot. You can ask for accommodations such as:

- Walking around after the shot instead of sitting.
- Having someone vaccinate the youth in your car.
- Having their favorite companion accompany and help them during the appointment.
- Getting vaccinated in a quiet room away from the crowds.

Questions?

Health care providers will be available to answer your questions at the COVID-19 vaccination appointment. However, if you have any questions before then, ask a trusted health care provider.

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To obtain this information in a different format, call 651-201-5414.