



Children & Youth with Special Healthcare Needs

www.doh.wa.gov/cyshcn

COVID-19 Vaccine and Flu 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 and flu. This is because they have underlying health conditions and close contact with health care providers. They may also have trouble wearing masks, washing their hands, and keeping a safe distance from others.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend the COVID-19 and Flu vaccination for everyone 6 months and older.

COVID-19

- The 2024-2025 Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for people 6 months and older.
- The 2024-2025 Moderna COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for people 6 months and older.
- The 2024-2025 Novavax COVID-19 vaccine is available for people ages 12 years and older.
- These vaccines are very safe and effective for protecting children and youth from respiratory infections.

FLU

- **Injectable:** For people 6 months to 64 years old, there are no recommendations for one brand of flu vaccine over another. All Flu vaccines for 2024-25 protect against three strains of flu virus. The vaccine composition is updated every year to match the most current circulating strains.
- **Nasal spray:** This is a live attenuated vaccine. Approved for people age 2 years to 49 years. Not recommended for pregnant people, immunocompromised people, older adults, and people with certain medical injuries.
- **High dose and adjuvanted:** Create a stronger immune response. Recommended for adults age 65 and older.

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.
- Children who are infected with the flu can develop short and long term health complications, including heart complications.

Vaccination is the best way to keep children healthy and safe.

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

Children with special health care needs or [certain medical conditions](#) may be more likely to get severely ill if they get COVID-19 or the flu. Vaccination is a critical way to protect children from respiratory illness.

Another way to protect children is to ensure that others in their household are fully vaccinated. That means it is important for parents and caregivers to get vaccinated, too.

The COVID-19 and Flu vaccines are 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 either vaccine.

- [COVID-19 Vaccine Basics](#)
- [Seasonal Flu Vaccine Basics](#)

The benefits of vaccination far outweigh the risks. 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 or the Flu 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
- Tiredness
- Fever
- Muscle aches
- Headache
- 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 and flu 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 either vaccine is very low. The risk of developing serious symptoms after a respiratory infection is much higher than the risk of developing serious side effects after a vaccine. Learn more about a potential serious side effect of COVID-19 vaccination [here](#):

[COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

[Flu Vaccine](#)

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 and flu vaccine.

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 shot. 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.

Where can I find more information?

For the latest information on vaccinating youth: For

COVID-19, visit [COVID-19 Vaccine Information](#)

For Flu, visit [Flufreewa.org](https://www.flufreewa.org)

Other resources:

- Guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics on [Caring for CYSHCN During the Pandemic](#).
- The CDC's Flu Information and Support for [People with Disabilities](#).
- [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](#) 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](https://www.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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