

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

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends everyone 6 months of age and older stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccination. 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. For more information on vaccines recommended for specific age groups, visit [CDC: Vaccines for Moderately to Severely Immunocompromised People \(www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/immunocompromised-people.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/immunocompromised-people.html).

Youth 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.

What is in the vaccine?

The health care provider giving the vaccine will provide you with an emergency use authorization (EUA) fact sheet that has a detailed ingredients list. They can answer any questions about allergies. None of the vaccine products for any age group contain eggs, preservatives, or latex.

The Pfizer vaccine for people 12 years and older contains:

- mRNA
- Lipids: ((4-hydroxybutyl)azanediyl)bis(hexane-6,1-diyl)bis(2-hexyldecanoate), 2[(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide, 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine, and cholesterol)
- Salts: potassium chloride, monobasic potassium phosphate, sodium chloride, dibasic sodium phosphate dihydrate
- Sugar

The Pfizer vaccine for children 6 months through 11 years contains:

- mRNA
- Lipids: ((4-hydroxybutyl)azanediyl)bis(hexane-6,1-diyl)bis(2-hexyldecanoate), 2[(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide, 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine, and cholesterol)
- Salts: sodium chloride
- Buffers: tromethamine, tromethamine hydrochloride
- Sugar

The Moderna vaccine contains:

- mRNA
- Lipids: (SM-102, polyethylene glycol 2000 dimyristoyl glycerol [DMG], cholesterol, and 1,2-distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine)
- Salts: sodium acetate trihydrate
- Acids: acetic acid
- Buffers: tromethamine, tromethamine hydrochloride
- Sugar

The Novavax vaccine contains:

- Recombinant form of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein produced from baculovirus infected Sf9 (fall armyworm) insect cells and MatrixMTM adjuvant containing saponins derived from the soapbark tree (*Quillaja saponaria* Molina)
- Lipids: cholesterol, phosphatidylcholine
- Salts: potassium dihydrogen phosphate, potassium chloride, disodium hydrogen phosphate dihydrate, sodium chloride, disodium hydrogen phosphate heptahydrate, sodium dihydrogen phosphate monohydrate
- Other ingredients: polysorbate 80, water for injection, small amounts of baculovirus and insect cell proteins and DNA

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 [CDC: Myocarditis and Pericarditis After mRNA COVID-19 Vaccination \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/myocarditis.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/myocarditis.html).

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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