

School-based COVID immunisation for 12 to 15 year olds: School information and FAQs

All young people aged 16 and 17 have now been offered a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Children and young people aged 12-17 years who are at increased risk from infection or are living with someone who is immunocompromised have also been offered the vaccine.

In Autumn 2021, all children aged 12 (as of the 22nd September 2021 or before) up to 15 years are being offered a first dose of the vaccine alongside flu vaccination as part of the school-based vaccination programme. The flu vaccination programme already includes all children in primary schools and is being expanded this year to include older children up to and including Year 11.

Inclusion of the offer of COVID-19 vaccination has been agreed as part of the national COVID-19 school-based vaccination programme. In our area, the School Immunisation Service is provided by Dorset HealthCare and the wider COVID-19 vaccination programme is delivered across primary care (GPs), hospital trusts, community pharmacies and Dorset HealthCare.

What are the timescales of the universal 12 to 15 year old COVID-19 vaccination programme and why?

Our local programme will begin in the week of 20 September 2021. We expect to have completed the programme before the end of the Autumn term with ongoing vaccination offers available for those wanting to accept the offer at a later date.

Where will COVID-19 and flu vaccinations for 12-15 year olds be delivered?

Most vaccinations will be given in a school setting, with catch-up community clinics for young people who are unable to attend school-based clinics. Parents/carers will be sent information about both vaccinations via their child's school and all parent enquiries, questions and advice will be managed by the service.

How will the consent process work?

The consent information sent via school will include either a paper consent form or a link to an online consent portal. There are separate consent forms for the flu and COVID-19 vaccines and parents/carers will be asked whether or not they agree to their child having each vaccine separately. All parents or those with parental responsibilities are asked for consent and will usually make this decision jointly with their children. Parents can consent to either, both or none of the vaccines offered.

Alongside the consent information, the school aged immunisation service (SAIS) will provide parents with contact details for any enquiries or questions. While schools host immunisation services, they are not responsible for securing parental or child consent, for assessing Gillick competence or mediating between parents or children who disagree. Legal accountability for offering COVID-19 vaccines to children and young people sits with the SAIS and not with the school.

If parents/carers consent to both vaccines, they will be given at the same time. The flu vaccine is generally administered using a nasal spray, while the COVID-19 vaccine will be given with an injection to a child's upper arm.

What happens if parent/carers don't give consent but their child wants to have the flu or COVID-19 vaccine?

No child will be vaccinated within a school setting without consent from their parent or carer.

If a child aged 12 to 15 expresses that they would like to have the COVID-19 or flu vaccination and their parent/carer has refused consent or not replied to the consent request, the child will be given the SAIS number to call should the parent wish to discuss it.

Children under the age of 16 can consent to their own treatment if they're believed to have enough intelligence, competence and understanding to fully appreciate what's involved in their treatment. This is known as being Gillick competent. This will not be undertaken during the school base sessions and consent will be required before any child is vaccinated.

What happens if a child is unwell on the day of the vaccination clinic at their school?

There will be a series of community clinics for 12 to 15 year olds. Anyone who is unable to attend the vaccination session at their school will be able to have the COVID-19 and/or flu vaccination in one of these clinics. Information about how to book an appointment will be provided nearer the time.

What type of COVID-19 vaccine will be given to children?

In our area, we will be using the Comirnaty vaccine (the new name for Pfizer) for children aged 12 to 15 and they will be given one dose. If a second dose is recommended in future, parents/carers will be asked to complete another consent form.

What if a parent objects to the intranasal flu vaccine (LAIV) on grounds of porcine gelatine content?

If a parent objects to having the flu vaccine on the grounds of the porcine gelatine content, an alternative flu vaccine will be offered via the School Immunisation Service, which would be given by an injection to the upper arm.

Why and how are flu and COVID-19 vaccines being co-administered?

Co-administration of flu and COVID-19 vaccination is supported by clinical guidance for vaccinations and NHS England and Improvement guidance for SAIS teams. The flu and COVID-19 vaccinations will have separate consent forms and parents can consent for either, both or neither vaccination.

Although the vaccines will be administered at the same time, the flu vaccine is generally given to children as a nasal spray while the COVID vaccine is given as an injection in the upper arm, so there is no possibility of the vaccines being confused.

Where can I get more information on the programme?

Schools can contact the school aged immunisation service on **01425 891162** or by emailing:

dhc.COVIDVaccinations1215@nhs.net for COVID-19 vaccination queries

dhc.immsenquiries@nhs.net for flu vaccination queries

Parents will be given contact details for the parental advice line when they are contacted directly for consent.

Public Health England has also produced a range of helpful resources for schools and parents: [COVID-19 vaccination: resources for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-schools).

You can also find information on Dorset HealthCare's website:

[Dorset HealthCare :: Dorset School Age Immunisation Service](#).