

## Questions and Answers (Q&A) - 12-15 year olds – vaccine rollout (August 2021)

QUESTION	ANSWER
Q. Why is this happening now?	A. <i>The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has been reviewing evidence and research on the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people and has concluded that for certain groups with underlying conditions, there is increased risk of becoming very unwell or becoming hospitalised if they catch Coronavirus. The Government has accepted the JCVI's recommendation and that 12-15 year olds with Down's syndrome be included in a prioritised group to be given the vaccine now.</i>
Q. When is this happening? What are the timescales involved here?	A. <i>In Scotland, the plan is to issue correspondence or make contact with families who have a 12-15 year old with Down's syndrome from the 2nd of August 2021. The vaccine involves two doses so the vaccination of 12-15 year olds with Down's syndrome is likely to continue throughout August, September and into October.</i>
Q. As a parent/carer of a 12-15 year old with Down's syndrome, what do I need to do now?	A. <i>You will be contacted by your local health board who will offer your daughter/son an appointment, confirming the date, time and location for getting the vaccine. Contact might be by correspondence, but it could also be a phonecall. You don't have to do anything.</i>
Q. What if I can't attend at the date or time given?	A. <i>If you are unable attend your appointment and need to reschedule the day or time; or your care needs make it impossible or very difficult to attend a clinic situation and you require an alternative arrangement, call the national COVID-19 vaccine helpline on <b>0800 030 8013</b>. If required, they can pass your details to your local Health Board to discuss your vaccination support needs.</i>
Q. As a parent/carer, I am worried about the risks involved in giving my child the vaccine. What are the risks??	A. <i>The JCVI have considered the risks in reaching their conclusion that 12-15 year olds with Down's syndrome should be offered the vaccine. Their view is that the benefit of getting the vaccine outweighs the risks.</i>  <i>NHS Scotland will only use a vaccine if it meets the required standards of safety and effectiveness. All medicines, including vaccines, are tested for safety</i>

	<p><i>and effectiveness before they're allowed to be used. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has to assess all the data and also ensure a vaccine works and that all the necessary trials and checks have been completed.</i></p> <p><i>The MHRA will only approve a vaccine for supply in the UK if the expected standards of safety, quality and efficacy are met. The safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines continues to be checked while in use.</i></p>
<p><b>Q. What are the side effects?</b></p>	<p><i>A. It's normal to experience side effects after the vaccine. It shows the vaccine is teaching your body's immune system how to protect itself from the disease, however not everyone gets them.</i></p> <p><i>Most of these are mild and short term. They may include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>• having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection</i></li> <li><i>• headache or muscle ache</i></li> <li><i>• joint pain</i></li> <li><i>• chills</i></li> <li><i>• nausea or vomiting</i></li> <li><i>• feeling tired</i></li> <li><i>• fever (temperature above 37.8°C).</i></li> </ul> <p><i>You may also have flu-like symptoms with episodes of shivering and shaking for a day or two. These common side effects are much less serious than developing coronavirus or complications associated with coronavirus and they usually go away within a few days.</i></p> <p><i>In the clinical trial that involved around 1,000 children aged 12 to 15, side effects in this group were generally short lived and mild to moderate, including fever.</i></p>

<p>Q. Has there been consideration of the specific side-effects that might impact children and young people with Down's syndrome more acutely, specifically thinking about young people with heart conditions?</p>	<p>A. <i>Worldwide, there have been recent, rare cases of inflammation of the heart called myocarditis or pericarditis reported after coronavirus vaccines, although it is not yet clear that these are caused by the vaccines. The incidence of this side-effect is very low.</i></p> <p><i>These cases have been seen mostly in younger men within several days of vaccination. Most of these people recovered and felt better following rest and simple treatments.</i></p> <p><i>You should seek medical advice urgently if you experience:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>chest pain</i></li> <li>• <i>shortness of breath</i></li> <li>• <i>feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering, or pounding heart</i></li> </ul> <p><i>If you want to find out more about side effects go to this website:</i></p> <p><b><a href="https://nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccinesideeffects">nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccinesideeffects</a></b></p> <p><i>We have contacted the Down's Syndrome Medical Interest Group and the Downs Syndrome Heart Group and are awaiting their view on this issue.</i></p>
<p>Q. Were children and young people with Down's syndrome included in any clinical trials for this vaccine?</p>	<p>A. <i>It is not known whether the clinical trials included children and young people with Down's syndrome. It is probably unlikely.</i></p>
<p>Q. Why is it only others living with young people who are immunosuppressed that are also being invited for the vaccine? Why is Down's syndrome not included?</p>	<p>A. <i>The Government is following the JCVI advice on this and it is based on specific data about efficacy of the vaccine for those who are immunosuppressed which suggested a less strong immune response in this group. The rationale is that since those people may not receive the same protection from the vaccine, vaccinating their household members aged 12+ adds to the protection they have.</i></p> <p><i>The Trisomy21 Research Society (T21RS) has made some comment on this issue, noting that in some cases young people with Down's syndrome also experience a less strong immune response. We are in touch with Government and the Chief Medical Officer's office about this and will update as further information becomes available.</i></p>

<p>Q. Will I be able to get the vaccine in a nasal form or as a tablet?</p>	<p>A. <i>No, not at present. We understand that some trials are taking place on alternative forms of the vaccine (nasal spray and tablets) but these trials will not have concluded in time for this current rollout.</i></p>
<p>Q. My daughter/son has a planned operation in the next six weeks. What should I do? Should they get the vaccine?</p>	<p>A. <i>You should speak to your GP and/or your hospital clinician to seek advice.</i></p>
<p>Q. My daughter/son also has an underlying health condition as well as having Down's syndrome. What should I do?</p>	<p>A. <i>When you are contacted by your local health board to come forward for the vaccine, you should make them aware of these additional conditions. If you are worried, you should discuss this with your GP and/or hospital clinician.</i></p>
<p>Q. What is the gap between the first dose and the second dose?</p>	<p>A. <i>It is proposed that for the rollout of the vaccine to the 12-15 year old age group that the gap between the first and second dose of the vaccine is 8 weeks.</i></p>
<p>Q. Will schools be encouraged to support the vaccine rollout for children and young people with Down's syndrome (both mainstream provision and special needs Schools)?</p>	<p>A. <i>Work is underway with schools and education authorities, to discuss arrangements for the continued rollout of the vaccine to 12-15 year olds as it is most likely that the second dose will occur when schools have returned.</i></p>
<p>Q. Will there be flexibility in where and how I receive the vaccine e.g. at home, at school, not just at a vaccination centre?</p>	<p>A. <i>The Government has stressed the need for 12-15 year olds with underlying conditions to get the vaccine in the most appropriate setting for their situation. This may be in their own home or a care setting, or at a clinic, depending on their care or health needs. When contacted to come forward for the vaccine, you should discuss your daughter/son's support needs at that time.</i></p>
<p>Q. What if I am not contacted and/or do not receive a letter inviting my daughter/son to come forward for a vaccine? What should I do?</p>	<p>A. <i>If you have not been contacted over the next 3-4 weeks, please contact the COVID-19 vaccination hotline on <b>0800 030 8013</b> and explain that you have a daughter/son who has Down's syndrome and who is in the 12-15 age group category. They will likely pass your details to your local health board who will organise your appointment.</i></p> <p><i>You can also contact <b>Down's Syndrome Scotland</b> on <b>0300 030 2121</b> and we can make representations to make sure your 12-15 year old son/daughter is included in the vaccine programme.</i></p>