



# General information on the COVID-19 vaccination with an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna)

## Is the vaccination safe and effective?

Since every vaccine in Switzerland must be authorised, it has to meet stringent safety, efficacy and quality requirements. Swissmedic, the Swiss Agency for Therapeutic Products, has carefully assessed and authorised the mRNA vaccines against COVID-19. They are safe and effective. Several tens of thousands of people have received the vaccines in clinical trials. Since their approval, several billions of people have received these vaccines. They are also safe and effective for the elderly and those with chronic illnesses. Experts will continue to monitor the safety and efficacy of the vaccines. The benefits of a vaccine must significantly outweigh the risks. Only then will the vaccine be recommended in Switzerland.

## Where can I be vaccinated?

The federal government has drawn up a vaccination strategy and vaccination recommendations. The cantons are responsible for vaccination. Find out from your cantonal website or infoline ([www.foph-coronavirus.ch/cantons](http://www.foph-coronavirus.ch/cantons)) where you can be vaccinated, or ask your doctor or pharmacist.

## For whom is the vaccination recommended?

We recommend vaccination against COVID-19 with an mRNA vaccine for everyone aged 12 and over.

The recommendation applies in particular for

- people for whom the coronavirus is particularly dangerous (people with certain chronic illnesses, those aged over 65 and pregnant women);
- those who have close contact with these people privately or through their work.

For children aged from 5 to 11 we recommend vaccination with the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for children.

## Who should not be vaccinated with mRNA vaccines?

We do not recommend the COVID-19 vaccination for the following:

- People with a severe, confirmed allergy to an ingredient of the vaccines, particularly polyethylene glycol (PEG) or tromethamine (TRIS). Other types of vaccine are also available. Please seek advice from an allergist.
- Children under the age of 5. So far not enough data is available on vaccination in this age group.

Please note: If you have a high temperature or are feeling ill or unwell, postpone your vaccination. Go for the vaccination as soon as you can.

## What about if I am pregnant or planning to become pregnant?

Are you planning to become pregnant? Then get vaccinated as soon as possible.

If you are already pregnant and did not get vaccinated before pregnancy, we recommended vaccination ideally from 12 weeks of pregnancy (i.e. from the 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester). However, vaccination is generally also possible earlier in the pregnancy.

If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant and have questions about the vaccination, talk to your doctor or midwife.

## What happens during the vaccination?

You will receive an injection in the upper arm. After the first vaccination, you will stay on site for 15 minutes for observation. After the second vaccination 5 minutes are sufficient.

## How many injections do I have to have?

Usually two injections are needed for the primary vaccination course. You can receive the second injection four weeks after the first.

If you have already had a coronavirus infection, you usually only need one vaccination with an mRNA vaccine for the primary vaccination course.

There are exceptions for people at especially high risk with seriously impaired immunity; ask your doctor.

For anyone 12 years of age and older, a booster vaccination is recommended from four months after completion of the primary vaccination course (see the information sheet "*Booster vaccination with an mRNA vaccine*").

## How does the vaccination protect me?

Your body gradually builds up protection against COVID-19. This takes up to around one or two weeks after the second injection. The vaccination strengthens your immune system. It helps your body fight the virus. The risk that you will get severe COVID-19 is then greatly reduced.

Important: With the current variants, vaccine protection against infection and mild cases of the disease is modest and short-lived.

You will find further details on how the vaccination works here: [www.foph-coronavirus.ch/mrna](http://www.foph-coronavirus.ch/mrna)

## How long does the vaccination protect me?

The mRNA vaccines provide effective protection against severe cases of disease requiring hospital admission. But with the current variants, the protection afforded by primary vaccination declines rapidly. We recommend everyone from age 12 to have a booster vaccination from 4 months after completion of the primary vaccination course. The booster increases and extends protection against serious illness (see "*Booster vaccination with an mRNA vaccine*" information sheet).

**Can I get COVID-19 because of the vaccination?**

No. You do not get COVID-19 as a result of the vaccination. The vaccines do not contain any coronaviruses.

**Should I get vaccinated if I've already been infected with the coronavirus?**

It is still worthwhile getting vaccinated if you have already had a coronavirus infection. We recommend that you have the vaccination to give you better and longer-term protection. If possible, get yourself vaccinated within three months of having been infected. From four weeks after a confirmed coronavirus infection, one dose of vaccine is usually sufficient for the primary vaccination course.

**Are there any side effects?**

Since their approval, several billions of people have received these vaccines. The benefits significantly outweigh the risks. Side effects can occur with any vaccination. They are usually mild to moderate and pass quickly. Serious side effects occur very rarely. In individual cases, for example, people have experienced a serious allergic reaction directly after the COVID-19 vaccination with an mRNA vaccine. In very rare cases, inflammation of the heart muscle or the pericardium has been observed in the 14 days after the vaccination. Most of these cases were mild and could be treated effectively. Among people under age 30 such inflammations were observed more frequently after vaccination with the Moderna vaccine. The recommendation is therefore for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine to be favoured for primary vaccination for those under 30. The following applies to both vaccines: The benefits of a COVID-19 vaccination outweigh any possible risks, also among people under 30 years of age. Inflammation of the heart muscle or pericardium also occurs after infection with the coronavirus. Aside from that, there have so far been no noticeable problems with serious side effects. Such side effects could be expected to emerge within a few months of the vaccination. Experts are keeping a close eye on potential indications.

**What side effects are possible?**

- The place on your arm where you received the injection can become inflamed, painful or swollen.
- Headaches
- Tiredness
- Muscle and joint pains
- General symptoms such as shivering,
- feeling feverish or a mild fever

These side effects are common after a vaccination. They indicate that the body is building up protection against the disease.

An allergic reaction is typically associated with severe swelling, redness, itching or shortness of breath immediately after the injection. Typical symptoms of heart muscle inflammation are chest pain, shortness of breath and palpitations, usually within 2 weeks after the vaccination. You should contact your doctor immediately if you experience such symptoms.

**How long can side effects last?**

The side effects usually disappear within a few days. If you are still experiencing side effects after a week, or if they get worse or cause you concern, contact your doctor.

**Who pays for the vaccination?**

Your vaccination is free of charge for you. Your health insurer pays for part of the vaccination. The federal government and the cantons will pay the remainder.

**Is the vaccination voluntary?**

Yes. Vaccinations are voluntary in Switzerland.

**Where can I find further information?**

You will find further information on COVID-19 vaccination on the FOPH website: [www.foph-coronavirus.ch/vaccination](http://www.foph-coronavirus.ch/vaccination)  
Or you can ask your doctor or pharmacist.