COVID-19 VACCINATION

Information for adults who are close contacts of people at especially high risk

Why should I be vaccinated?
- Vaccination protects you against COVID-19, an illness that is usually mild, but can sometimes also be serious.
- Lasting health problems can occur after a bout of COVID-19 (for example breathing difficulties when carrying out strenuous activities, or tiredness). This can occur even in younger, healthy individuals. By having the vaccination you can greatly lower the risk of suffering from the illness and its consequences.
- Immunisation against COVID-19 means that you stay healthy and can take care of those who are at especially high risk, whether in your private life or at work.
- If you are vaccinated, you’re well protected from the disease and its symptoms. Current data on the mRNA vaccines also show that the transmission of the coronavirus to other people is low after full vaccination. So vaccination with an mRNA vaccine also reduces the risk of passing on the coronavirus, which means you can use it to protect people at especially high risk in your family, in your household or at work. More data on this matter is expected in future.
- The vaccines authorised in Switzerland are safe and effective.

There are some people for whom the coronavirus is especially dangerous. In a worst-case scenario, COVID-19 can prove fatal for these people. So if you come into close contact with people who are at especially high risk, it’s a good idea to be vaccinated yourself, as vaccination does not work equally well in everyone who receives the vaccine. For people with a weakened immune system in particular the vaccination may be less effective. Also, for medical reasons not everyone who is at especially high risk can be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Who is considered to be at especially high risk?
- People aged 65 and over
- Pregnant women
- Adults with trisomy 21
- Adults with certain forms of the following chronic illnesses:
  - high blood pressure
  - cardiovascular illnesses
  - diabetes
  - pulmonary and respiratory illnesses
  - cancer
  - illnesses and treatments that weaken the immune system
  - obesity (BMI ≥ 35 kg/m²)
  - renal insufficiency
  - liver cirrhosis

Am I a “close contact”?
You are a close contact if you live in the same household as someone who is at especially high risk. Or if you look after relatives who are at especially high risk.
You are also a close contact if you come into contact with people at especially high risk in connection with your work – for example if you are a nurse or doctor, work in a hospital or in home healthcare, in an old people’s home, an institution for people with disabilities or as a personal assistant.

1 You can find the detailed list of conditions here: List of people at especially high risk (PDF, 160 kB)

Is the vaccination safe and effective?
In Switzerland, every vaccine needs an authorisation. For this, it has to meet stringent safety, efficacy and quality requirements. Swissmedic, the Swiss Agency for Therapeutic Products, has carefully assessed and authorised the vaccines against COVID-19. Several tens of thousands of people have received the vaccines in clinical trials. They are also safe and effective for the elderly and those with chronic illnesses. For the time being only the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is authorised for adolescents aged from 12 to 17. Since their approval, several million people have received these vaccines. Experts 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 and when 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) who can currently be vaccinated and where, or ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Who should not be vaccinated?
We do not recommend the COVID-19 vaccination with an mRNA vaccine for the following:
• People with a severe, confirmed allergy to an ingredient of the vaccines, particularly polyethylene glycol (PEG).
• Children under the age of 12. So far not enough data is available on vaccination in this age group.

There is still not very much data on the vaccination in pregnancy. For the time being we still do not recommend COVID-19 vaccination for pregnant women across the board. However, we do recommend vaccination with an mRNA vaccine for those with certain forms of chronic illnesses or those at a greater risk of infection (such as healthcare personnel). All other pregnant women also have the option of having the vaccination. Please talk to your doctor if you’re pregnant.

Where can I find further information?
You will find further information on COVID-19 vaccination on the FOPH website (www.foph-coronavirus.ch/vaccination) or ask your doctor or pharmacist.