Information for people aged 16 and over with certain chronic illnesses, people over 65 and pregnant women

I have a chronic illness or a congenital infirmity. I am aged 65 or over. I am pregnant.
COVID-19 may pose a risk to you.
We therefore recommend the following: Get vaccinated with an mRNA vaccine.
Talk to your doctor about it.

Why does COVID-19 pose a risk to me?
COVID-19 can have serious, or even very serious, consequences for you. For example, severe shortness of breath in connection with pneumonia. You will then need to be admitted to hospital and given oxygen. It may take a long time before you are healthy again. If the illness gets worse, you will then need to be treated in intensive care. You may need to be put on a ventilator. COVID-19 can also damage other organs, and in the worst case you can die from it.

For what illnesses and congenital infirmities does the FOPH especially recommend COVID-19 vaccination?
We recommend vaccination especially for all people age 16 and over 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

We also recommend vaccination for people aged 16 and over with trisomy 21.

Can I get vaccinated if I am pregnant or planning to become pregnant?
Pregnant women have a significantly higher risk of a serious case of COVID-19. This can increase the risk of premature birth. For this reason, you should get vaccinated as soon as possible if you are planning to get pregnant. If you are already pregnant and did not get vaccinated before pregnancy, we recommended vaccination from 12 weeks of pregnancy (i.e. from the 2nd 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.

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 vaccines against COVID-19.
They are safe and effective – also for the elderly and those with chronic illnesses as well as for pregnant women.
Several tens of thousands of people have received the mRNA vaccines in clinical trials. Since their approval, several billion 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.
The risk of serious side effects after the vaccination is much lower than the danger of falling seriously ill after being infected with the coronavirus.

Which vaccine is recommended for whom?
We recommend vaccination with an mRNA vaccine for everyone aged 12 and over. These vaccines currently offer optimal protection against severe illness and its potential consequences. People under 30 years of age are preferably recommended to be vaccinated with the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. For children aged 5 to 11, only Pfizer/BioNTech’s mRNA vaccine for children is recommended.
Those aged 18 or over who are unable to receive an mRNA vaccine for medical reasons, or who oppose mRNA vaccines, can also be vaccinated with the Janssen viral vector vaccine or the Novavax protein vaccine.

Caution: pregnant and breastfeeding women and people with a seriously weakened immune system should ideally be vaccinated with an mRNA vaccine.

Who should not be vaccinated?
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). But 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.

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

2 However, people who cannot receive an mRNA vaccine for medical reasons may, in consultation with their doctor, be able to be vaccinated with the Janssen viral vector vaccine or the Novavax protein vaccine.
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) where you can be vaccinated, or ask your doctor or pharmacist.

How often must I be vaccinated?
Generally, two vaccinations are needed for the primary vaccination course. You can receive the second injection about four weeks after the first. Have both injections.
If you have already had a confirmed coronavirus infection, you will generally only need one vaccination with an mRNA vaccine for the primary vaccination course.
People who are at especially high risk and with seriously impaired immunity are an exception; please talk to your doctor.

For whom is a booster vaccination with an mRNA vaccine recommended after four months?
For all people 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”).
The booster vaccination is also recommended for pregnant women from the second trimester onwards and for breastfeeding women.
The mRNA vaccines provide effective protection against cases of COVID-19 requiring hospital admission. But with the current variants, this protection provided by initial immunisation declines rapidly. The booster reminds the immune system of the pathogen. It increases and extends protection against severe cases of the disease (see the information sheet “Booster vaccination with an mRNA vaccine”).

Who is recommended to have an additional booster (after the first booster has been administered)?
An additional booster is currently recommended for anyone aged 80 and over. We also recommend an additional booster vaccination for people with a severely weakened immune system (due to illness or medication); in this case, consult your doctor.
An additional booster can be given starting four months after the last vaccination. It increases the protection against severe illness, for at least a certain period of time.

Have you been infected with the coronavirus since your last vaccination? Since this infection has not significantly increased your protection against severe disease, we recommend an additional booster. You can be vaccinated from four weeks after the infection (taking account of the minimum interval of four months following the last COVID-19 vaccination).

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.