



Communities and Justice Advice: COVID-19 vaccinations for 5-11 year old children in out-of-home care

December 2021

Why is the health of children and young people in out-of-home care particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Children and young people in care have increased physical, developmental, emotional and mental health needs compared to their peers in the general community.

These increased health needs make children and young people in out-of-home care vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19. Being vaccinated significantly reduces the chance of severe COVID-19 disease and helps keep families and communities safe.

During this time, it is particularly important that health practitioners, caseworkers and carers work together to ensure that the health needs of children and young people continue to be identified and addressed.

Which vaccine should children get?

The Therapeutic Goods Administration has provisionally approved the Pfizer vaccine as safe and effective for use among Australian children aged 5 to 11 years old.

The paediatric Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is the only vaccine recommended for this age group.

The Pfizer vaccine is the same safe and effective vaccine used for other age groups against COVID-19, however is one-third the dose approved for those aged 12 years and over.

How do I make an appointment for a vaccination?

From early 2022 children aged 5 to 11 years old will be able to receive their vaccination against COVID-19.

Appointments can be booked through a General Practitioner (GP), NSW Health or Australian Government. You can visit the Australian Government COVID-19 vaccine clinic finder at healthdirect.gov.au to search for a location near you and make a booking.

Vaccine supplies may be limited in your local area so you might have to wait for an appointment. More vaccinations become available every day so keep checking availability.

If you need more advice you can contact the child's GP to discuss any questions relating to their health and medical conditions.

How can I get support through this process?

Your caseworker will support eligible children to receive their vaccination. Talk to the child's caseworker if you have any worries about getting the children in your care vaccinated. Your caseworker can support you when talking to the child about the vaccine, booking the appointment, and getting to the appointment if needed.

Consent to the vaccine

Carers and guardians can consent for children in out-of-home care aged 5 to 11 years old. Please remember to bring your ID, the child's ID and your confirmation of placement letter to confirm that you are their carer, in case you need it when providing consent.

Please keep in mind, some vaccine clinics will require children to be accompanied by a carer or guardian to the appointment to provide consent.



Communities and Justice Advice: COVID-19 vaccinations for 5-11 year old children in out-of-home care

December 2021

What if the child in my care does not want to have the vaccine?

Talk to the child or young person in your care about the vaccine and what will happen during the vaccination procedure. Talk about the vaccination in a way the child can understand. Let them know that a vaccine is a type of medicine that helps people fight a virus if they come into contact with it and it can stop people from getting sick from the virus. Talk to your caseworker if the child you care remains very worried about the vaccine.

What if the child I am caring for has a chronic health condition?

Children and young people with chronic health conditions such as diabetes, asthma, heart abnormalities or malnutrition and those with compromised immune systems are at more risk of being affected by COVID-19 than others. It is especially important that they are vaccinated.

I have other children in the household, are they eligible?

Other children in your care and other members of your household may be eligible too. All children aged 5 years and over are eligible for a vaccine from early January 2022. You may want to consider getting yourself and members of your household vaccinated together, if you have not already received the vaccine.

I'd like to know more about the vaccine and my responsibilities as a carer before I consent to the vaccine for the children in my care. Who can I speak with?

Vaccination is recommended by medical experts and if a child is not vaccinated, this can place them at higher risk of becoming very ill, and the risk can be reduced if they are vaccinated.

As an authorised carer, you have delegated care responsibility. That care responsibility is however subject to any written direction given to you by the agency you are authorised by, under s.157 (3) of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (Care Act).

Respect the wishes of the children in your care if they have the capacity to make their own decision about the vaccine.

Seek advice from the child's doctor if you have any questions or concerns, or ask your caseworker for support.

For more information the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) will release a video where DCJ along with some NSW Health experts answer carers' questions about the vaccine. This will be available on the [DCJ website](#) in January 2021.

For more information on the vaccine:

Contact the child's GP to discuss administration of the vaccine and vaccine related information. If you want to discuss any other concerns, please contact your caseworker.

The Australian Government has doubled the bulk billing incentive for GPs for face-to-face and telehealth services in response to COVID-19. More information about this is available on the [Australian Government Department of Health website](#). This will help to ensure that children and young people are provided with free, timely and appropriate access to essential primary health services.



Communities and Justice Advice: COVID-19 vaccinations for 5-11 year old children in out-of-home care

December 2021

Useful links

- [Australian Government Department of Health - is it true? Get the facts on COVID-19 vaccines](#)
- [NCIRS - COVID-19 and children - frequently asked questions](#)
- [NSW Health - COVID-19 vaccine safety and effectiveness](#)