PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS ✓

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 underline mRNA vaccines against COVID-19. They are safe and effective. 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. Since their approval, several billions of people have received these vaccines. 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)* 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 from whom coronavirus is particularly dangerous (people with a chronic illness, those aged over 65 and pregnant women);
• those who have close contact with these people privately or through their work.
We recommend vaccination against COVID-19 with the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for children aged between 5 and 11 (see fact sheet "*COVID-19 vaccination for children aged 5 to 11*").

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). 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.
If you are waiting for your COVID-19 test result, are in isolation or in quarantine, do not have the vaccination now. 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 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.

What happens during the vaccination?
You receive an injection in the upper arm. After the first vaccination, you will stay on site for 15 minutes for observation.

How many injections do I have to have?
Usually two injections are needed. You can receive the second injection about four weeks after the first.
You must receive both injections in order to obtain the best possible protection.
If you have already had a coronavirus infection, you usually only need one vaccination with an mRNA vaccine.

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

For people 16 years of age and older, a booster vaccination is recommended from four months after 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 body's defences. It helps your body fight the virus. The risk that you will get severe COVID-19 is then greatly reduced..
Important: Complete protection is not possible.
Some people can still get COVID-19 despite being vaccinated. So get tested immediately if you have symptoms of COVID-19.
You will find further details on how the vaccination works here: *www.foph-coronavirus.ch/mrna*

How long does the vaccination protect me?
The mRNA vaccines provide very effective protection against severe cases of COVID-19 requiring hospital admission. However, in people aged 65 and over, it appears that the protection afforded by the vaccination can decline over time.

For these individuals we recommend a booster vaccination 4 months after completing the primary vaccination course. So far, it is unclear whether the protection against severe disease decreases in those aged under 65 and for new virus variants. However, protection from mild cases and transmission of the virus declines over time for everybody. This can occur more or less quickly, depending on the variant. For this reason we also recommend everyone from age 16 to 64 to have a booster vaccination.

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. You are generally protected from renewed infection for a certain period after the infection. But it is not known just how long that protections lasts. We therefore 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. You do not have to have a second dose.

Are there any side effects?
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 vaccinating those under 30. The following applies to both vaccines: The benefits of a COVD-19 vaccination clearly outweigh any possible risks, also among people under 30 years of age. Inflammation of the heart muscle or pericardium occurs much more frequently after infection with the coronavirus than after vaccination. Besides 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. Since they indicate that the body is building up protection against the disease, they are a good sign when they are mild.
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. 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.

I am vaccinated. Can I infect other people with the coronavirus?
Once you have been fully vaccinated, the likelihood of becoming infected is greatly reduced, as is the risk of transmitting the virus. However, the vaccination does not provide 100% protection and protection declines over time. The protection afforded by the vaccine and the speed with which it decreases can vary depending on the virus variant.
Please remember: Continue to follow the hygiene and social distancing rules, and wear a mask where this is required.

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
Or you can ask your doctor or pharmacist.