



Information for people aged 16 and over with a chronic illness, 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 poses 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, 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 COVID-19 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 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 illnesses¹:

- high blood pressure
- cardiovascular illnesses
- diabetes
- pulmonary and respiratory illnesses
- cancer
- illnesses and treatments that weaken the immune system
- obesity (BMI \geq 35 kg/m²)
- renal insufficiency
- liver cirrhosis

We also recommend vaccination for adults with trisomy 21.

Can I get vaccinated if I am pregnant or planning to become pregnant?

Pregnant women have a significantly higher risk of experiencing serious illness after becoming infected with coronavirus. The risk of premature birth is also considerably higher. 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. Several tens of thousands of people have received the mRNA vaccines in clinical trials. They are also safe and effective for the elderly and those with chronic illnesses as well as for pregnant women.

Since their approval, hundreds of millions of 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 offer optimal protection against COVID-19 and its potential effects. 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.

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

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

**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.²
- Children under the age of 5. So far not enough data is available on vaccination in this age group.

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. You must receive both injections in order to obtain the best possible protection. If you have already had a confirmed coronavirus infection, you will generally only need one vaccination with an mRNA vaccine.

People who are at especially high risk and with 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 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*").

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. To provide the best possible protection against severe case of COVID-19 requiring hospital admission, we recommend all people aged 65 and over a booster vaccination 4 month 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.

The booster vaccination is also recommended for pregnant women from the third trimester onwards and for breastfeeding women.

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.

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.

