

11th Feb. 2022

Deputy Peadar Tóibín,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: peadar.toibin@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 4138-22

Question: To ask the Minister for Health when and the way that children with underlying health conditions aged between 5 and 11 years of age can avail of a Covid-19 vaccine.

Dear Deputy Tóibín,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

The policy regarding the roll out of the booster doses of COVID-19 vaccine is determined by NIAC and the Department of Health.

The European Medicine Agency (EMA) approval to vaccinate 5–11-year-old children was received on Thursday 25th November. On the 8th of December NIAC recommended COVID-19 vaccination for those aged 5 to 11 years:

- with underlying conditions
- living with a younger child with complex medical needs
- living with a person who is immunocompromised

NIAC also stated that a COVID-19 vaccination should be offered to all other children aged 5 to 11 years because of the:

- favourable benefit risk profile of the vaccine,
- to protect them from severe disease,
- the consequences that can follow infection e.g., multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MISC), long COVID, psychosocial and developmental impacts.

We commenced the vaccinations for very high risk children in late December through the paediatric hospitals. This expanded to include vaccinations in Vaccination Centres.

On December 28th 2021 the HSE opened the online portal which enabled parents/guardians to register children aged 5 to 11 and deemed to be high risk for their Covid-19 vaccination. This was a self-declaration process. Vaccination of high risk children was scheduled to commence from the week commencing the 3rd of January. The portal was then extended to parents/guardians of all children within this age category from January 3rd 2022.

All HSE Vaccination clinics for the 5-11 year olds age cohort have been modified to ensure that they are child friendly, which includes those children with additional needs. For example, the appointments are now 15 minutes long and if a child is identified (ahead of time via HSElive or on the day of vaccination) as having additional needs, there is guidance in the Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) for Vaccination Centres (VC) specific for these children. Some children will require additional assistance to attend the VC for vaccination for example additional time at the appointment or a quieter less crowded time for their appointment. VCs will try to accommodate these children at the start of clinics or other quiet periods. Where possible Vaccination Centres have been asked to consider some or all of the following measures to facilitate children with additional needs:

- Arrange for a room/cubicle with a little more room that is away from the Main VC Hall, near an exit door, in case that a child becomes distressed and needs to go outside to calm down
- Organise for alternatives to a chair, such as a mattress, yoga ball etc. as these may help to make a child with additional needs feels safer and more comfortable in the environment
- Some children will need a very quiet environment, turn off extractor fans, dim lights etc.
- Other children need to be stimulated and distracted – toys, posters, colourful walls, space to run around if required
- Arrange for these children and their parents to be brought in through a different entrance to the main one, preferably close to the room/cubicle where they will be vaccinated, and not in the general queue system
- Be aware when scheduling that a child with special needs will require extra time, and may require multiple attempts, even returning the next day if required.

Parents can request these accommodations by **free phoning HSE Live on 1800 700 700** in order to alert the VC when scheduling and prior to the appointment.

In addition to the accommodations that are recommended for all VCs where possible, there are also a number of Specialist Clinics available in parts of the country, for example City West VC in Dublin and a centre in Limerick. In addition to this, any children who are unable to leave their homes to receive a vaccination can receive their vaccine in their own homes. This can also be requested by **free phoning HSE Live on 1800 700 70**.

The channel for children to avail of the Covid19 vaccination is through the Public Portal Registration. To date over 118,000 parents/guardians have registered their children, of which 95% have been issued an appointment. The vaccination of 5 to 11 year olds has seen just under 94,000 of these children have received their dose one vaccine with over 3,000 of these now being fully vaccinated having received their dose two.

I trust the above information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



Damien McCallion
National Director
National Lead Test & Trace and Vaccination Programme