

# COVID-19 VACCINE BULLETIN 38

**Welcome to Bulletin 38 from the HSE National Immunisation Office which highlights changes in clinical guidance for the COVID-19 vaccination programme.**

## **Expansion of Booster Vaccination Programme to people aged 16 years and older**

Vaccination of people aged 60 years and older and healthcare workers is well underway. Plans for vaccination of people aged 50 years and older, and those aged 16-49 with underlying health conditions or resident in long-term care facilities, are in place.

The National Immunisation Advisory Committee has now recommended that booster vaccination be expanded to include all adults aged 16 years and older, including pregnant women.

In addition to prior recommendations, NIAC has advised rolling out booster vaccination for these additional groups in the following order of priority:

- All pregnant women aged 16 years and older
- All those aged 40-49 years who received any COVID-19 vaccine including COVID-19 vaccine Janssen®
- All those aged 16-39 years who received an mRNA vaccine in descending order by age cohort;
  - 30-39 years
  - 20-29 years
  - 16-19 years

Those aged 16-29 years who received COVID-19 vaccine Janssen® can be offered a booster vaccine (Comirnaty®) in parallel with those aged 30-39 years

[Read NIAC guidelines here](#)

## **Rationale for extension of the booster programme**

- The primary aim of the booster campaign is to protect against severe breakthrough infection.
- Age and underlying conditions are the most important determinants of risk of severe breakthrough infection. Pregnancy is a risk factor for severe illness and adverse outcomes related to COVID-19.
- Booster vaccination is associated with a substantial reduction in the rate of severe illness in those aged 40 to 49 years and also a reduction in confirmed infection across the age groups. As the effectiveness of the single dose COVID-19 vaccine Janssen vaccine is less robust than vaccines with a two dose schedule, offering an earlier booster vaccine may help to control the surge in case numbers in younger people.
- Booster doses of mRNA vaccines have not shown any unexpected short term safety concerns. The risk of myocarditis or other rare adverse reaction following an mRNA booster dose has yet to be characterised and will be closely monitored.

**Planning is underway and clinical guidance, training, medicines protocol and other supporting materials are being prepared.**

# COVID-19 VACCINE BULLETIN 38

## Spikevax® / Moderna Vaccine

**People aged less than 30 years being vaccinated against COVID-19 should receive Comirnaty® . Spikevax should not be used to vaccinate people aged less than 30 years.**

This applies to:

- The primary vaccination course
- The additional dose for people who are immunocompromised
- The booster dose

This follows the recommendations of the National immunisation Advisory Committee that people aged less than 30 years, should receive Comirnaty®, and not Spikevax® as a second or subsequent dose. This is as a precaution, as there have been reports of myocarditis and pericarditis occurring more frequently following a second dose of Spikevax®, compared with Comirnaty®. Because myocarditis and pericarditis is seen more frequently in people under 30, they should receive Comirnaty®.

## Dose of Spikevax®

Remember the booster dose of Spikevax is 0.25mls.

The dose for the primary series, or the additional dose for immunocompromised is 0.5mls.

## Recommended interval for mRNA booster doses

- The recommended interval between completion of the primary vaccination course and the booster dose is at least 5-6 months.
- Individuals who received COVID-19 vaccine Janssen® as their primary course may receive the booster dose of an mRNA vaccine at least 3 months after the primary course.

The dose intervals are calculated in **calendar months (not weeks)**. Booster vaccines can be given at a shorter interval (minimum of 2 months) in exceptional circumstances. Vaccinators in CVC's should seek advice from their clinical lead before using this shorter interval.


Vaccine given in primary vaccination course	Interval for mRNA Booster dose
Comirnaty®	At least 5-6 months
Spikevax®	At least 5-6 months
Vaxzevria®	At least 5-6 months
COVID-19 Vaccine Janssen®	At least 3 months

## Individuals who have a contraindication or a precaution to mRNA vaccines


Consideration may be given to booster vaccination with a viral vector vaccine (i.e. COVID-19 vaccine Janssen®) for people who have a contraindication or precaution to an mRNA vaccine. This includes pregnant women, following an individual discussion with their obstetric care giver. The intervals stated in the table above apply when giving COVID-19 vaccine Janssen® as a booster dose.

# COVID-19 VACCINE BULLETIN 38

We have updated our quick-reference guide for COVID-19 Vaccines used in the vaccination programme



**Quick Reference Guide to COVID-19 Vaccines**  
This is a summary of information, the full clinical guidance and NIAC guidelines should be consulted at [www.immunisation.ie](http://www.immunisation.ie)



Vaccine	Comirnaty® (Pfizer BioNTech)	Spikevax® (Moderna)	COVID-19 Vaccine Janssen® (only if cannot receive an mRNA vaccine)
<b>Primary vaccination course (recommended for people aged 12 years and older)</b>			
Age	≥12 years	≥30 years	≥18 years
Dose	0.3mls	0.5mls	0.5mls
Interval between dose 1 and dose 2	21-28 days	28 days	Not applicable
Timing since COVID-19 infection	4 weeks	4 weeks	4 weeks
<b>Additional dose for immunocompromised (recommended for people aged 12 years and older)</b>			
Age	≥12 years	≥30 years	≥18 years
Dose	0.3mls	0.5mls	0.5mls
Interval since finishing primary vaccination course	2 months	2 months	2 months
Timing since COVID-19 breakthrough infection	At least 6 months	At least 6 months	At least 6 months
<b>Booster dose for eligible groups*</b>			
Age	≥16 years	≥30 years	≥18 years
Dose	0.3mls	0.25mls	0.5mls
Interval since finishing primary vaccination course	If received an mRNA vaccine or Vaxzevria®: 5-6 months If received COVID-19 Vaccine Janssen®: 3 months	If received an mRNA vaccine or Vaxzevria®: 5-6 months If received COVID-19 Vaccine Janssen®: 3 months	If received an mRNA vaccine or Vaxzevria®: 5-6 months If received COVID-19 Vaccine Janssen®: 3 months
Timing since COVID-19 breakthrough infection	At least 6 months	At least 6 months	At least 6 months

\*Recommended for people aged 16 years and older, including pregnant women (see Chapter 5a, Immunisation Guidelines).  
For any questions regarding deviation in practice from that recommended in the guidance please contact the National Immunisation Office.

Version 140  
01/12/2021

Download here

## Comirnaty® COVID-19 vaccine: European Medicines Agency recommends approval for children aged 5 to 11

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has recommended granting an extension of indication for the COVID-19 vaccine Comirnaty® to include children aged 5 to 11.

In children from 5 to 11 years of age, the dose of Comirnaty® will be lower. The dose of vaccine for children is lower than that used in people aged 12 and above (10 µg compared with 30 µg). The vaccine formulation for children aged 5-11 is different to the adult vaccine (a different vial, a different dilution volume, and a different dose volume).

A main study in children aged 5 to 11 showed that the immune response to Comirnaty® given at a lower dose (10 µg) in this age group was comparable to that seen with the higher dose (30 µg) in 16- to 25-year-olds. The efficacy of Comirnaty® was calculated in almost 2,000 children from 5 to 11 years of age who had no sign of previous infection. These children received either the vaccine or a placebo (a dummy injection). Of the 1,305 children receiving the vaccine, three developed COVID-19 compared with 16 out of the 663 children who received placebo. This means that, in this study, the vaccine was 90.7% effective at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 (although the true rate could be between 67.7% and 98.3%).

The most common side effects in children aged 5 to 11 are similar to those in people aged 12 and above. They include pain at the injection site, tiredness, headache, redness and swelling at the site of injection, muscle pain and chills. These effects are usually mild or moderate and improve within a few days of vaccination. The EMA concluded that the benefits of Comirnaty® in children aged 5 to 11 outweigh the risks, particularly in those with conditions that increase the risk of severe COVID-19.

Read more here

The National Immunisation Advisory Committee’s has not yet issued recommendations in relation to the vaccination of children aged 5-11. These are awaited.

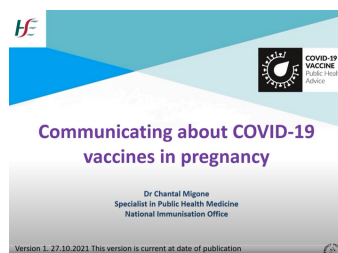
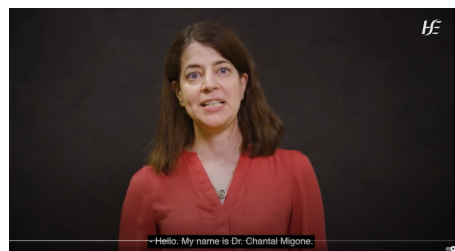
# COVID-19 VACCINE BULLETIN 38

## Updated resources on COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy

Did you know we have a dedicated webpage with resources to support health professionals who are advising and communicating about COVID-19 vaccine in pregnancy:

[Click here](#)

The page includes videos, posters and information in other languages.



## Research

### Risk for Stillbirth Among Women With and Without COVID-19 at Delivery Hospitalization — United States, March 2020–September 2021

Pregnant women are at increased risk for severe disease from COVID-19, and COVID-19 is associated with an increased risk for adverse perinatal outcomes.

Among 1,249,634 delivery hospitalizations during March 2020–September 2021, U.S. women with COVID-19 were at increased risk for stillbirth compared with women without COVID-19 (adjusted relative risk [aRR] = 1.90; 95% CI = 1.69–2.15). The magnitude of association was higher during the period of SARS-CoV-2 B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant predominance than during the pre-Delta period.



### What are the implications for public health practice?

Implementing evidence-based COVID-19 prevention strategies, including vaccination before or during pregnancy, is critical to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on stillbirths.

[Read more here](#)

# COVID-19 VACCINE BULLETIN 37

## Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme

### Reminder: GPs and Pharmacies can still order Flu vaccines

The Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV) or Children's Nasal Flu Vaccine and Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine are still available to order for the 2021/2022 influenza season. There are no limitations on the quantities of Flu vaccines that can be ordered by GPs and Pharmacies.

LAIV is given intra nasally and is the recommended flu vaccine for all children aged 2 to 17 years at the time of vaccination. It is also the recommended vaccine for children who are considered medically at risk.

The QIV injectable vaccine is the recommended flu vaccine for at risk groups including those with certain long term conditions, pregnant women and healthcare workers.

**The Flu vaccine provides the best protection from flu this winter.**

**Place your orders for the LAIV and QIV vaccines through your national cold chain account today.**

**Order Flu vaccines**

[Click here](#)

**Download Children's Flu Vaccine  
Toolkit and Factsheet**

[Click here](#)

**Download Flu Vaccine for Pregnant Women  
Toolkit and Factsheet**

[Click here](#)

### Find a pharmacy giving Flu vaccines

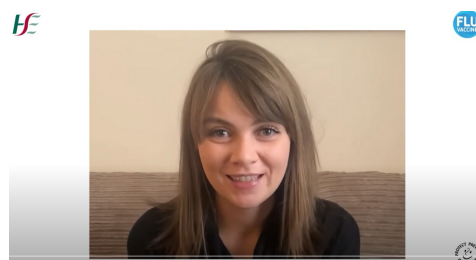
A list of pharmacies giving COVID-19 and Flu vaccines is now available on the HSE website.

[Find a pharmacy here](#)

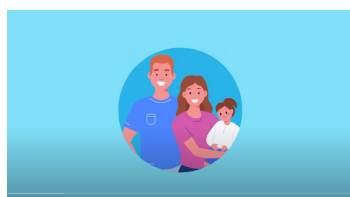
### Further information and resources

Watch this video of Dr Louise Marron, Specialist Registrar in Public Health Medicine at National Immunisation Office on why her children get the flu vaccine.

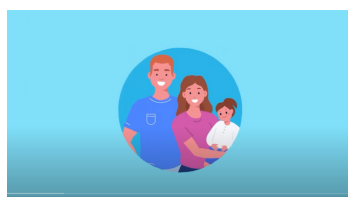
[Click here to watch](#)



We have developed some resources to support the Travelling and Roma communities. These resources can also be used in other settings.



**WATCH: Get the Flu Vaccine - Protect Yourself, Protect Others (English)**



**WATCH: Get the Flu Vaccine - Protect Yourself, Protect Others (Romanian)**



**WATCH: Why it is important for pregnant women to get the flu vaccine (Romanian)**

Learn more about HSE 2021/2022  
Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme

[Click here](#)

# COVID-19 VACCINE BULLETIN 37

## Website

Visit our website [www.immunisation.ie](http://www.immunisation.ie) regularly for the most up to date information to support vaccinators and health professionals responding to queries.

Our dedicated COVID-19 Vaccination section contains

- Information from the National Immunisation Advisory Committee
- Clinical guidelines
- COVID-19 vaccine studies
- IM injection technique reminders
- Dedicated pages for the licensed COVID-19 vaccines

[Visit here](#)

## HSeLand COVID-19 Vaccination Training Programme

You can access updates to the National Immunisation Office COVID-19 Vaccination Training Programme for Pfizer, Moderna and Janssen vaccine through your HSeLand account.

[Visit HSeLand](#)

We would encourage you to log in and complete the updated content in each programme to refresh your knowledge and ensure you are up to date with your COVID-19 Vaccination Training.

If you have any issues with the platform please contact HSeLand directly.

[Contact HSeLand](#)

## Do you have queries?

Clinical queries from healthcare professionals can be directed to our HSE email address.

[Send your query](#)



Should vaccines be exposed to temperatures outside of parameters please contact the National Immunisation Office pharmacists immediately. Contacts include:

- Mariangela Toma: mobile 087 7575679
- Cliona Kiersey: mobile 087 9915452

**Queries that are not clinical or technical cannot be answered by the National Immunisation Office**

Read about the role of the National Immunisation Office in supporting the COVID-19 vaccination programme on our [website](#).

Recommendations about COVID-19 vaccine are changing as more information becomes available so please visit our [website](#) for the most up to date information.