

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
ON COVID-19 VACCINE FOR CHILDREN AGED 5 – 11 YEARS OLD**

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1. WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE VACCINATING YOUR CHILD.

1.1. WHAT IS COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an illness caused by a virus called Coronavirus. Children with COVID-19 may not have any symptoms at all (asymptomatic) or present with one or more symptoms, typically of upper respiratory tract infections. The symptoms of COVID-19 can be fever, cough, shortness of breath and tiredness. These symptoms can also be due to other viral illnesses like common cold, flu or bronchiolitis in young children. Some children can present with diarrhoea and vomiting. Rarely, COVID-19 infection can cause pneumonia and severe breathing problems.

1.2. WHICH COVID-19 VACCINE IS AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN AGED 5 TO 11 YEARS IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM?

Currently in Brunei Darussalam, **only Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (paediatric formulation) is approved for use in children aged 5 to 11 years.**

1.3. ARE THERE OTHER COUNTRIES THAT HAVE ROLLED OUT COVID-19 VACCINATION FOR CHILDREN AGED 5 YEARS AND ABOVE?

Yes, some countries such as the USA, UK, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand have already started vaccinating their children, with many more countries that have done so or had announced plans to do so.

1.4. IS MY CHILD ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

All children aged 5 years and above residing in Brunei Darussalam, who are medically eligible to receive the vaccine (see 2.9 below).

1.5. CAN MY CHILD BELOW 5 YEARS OLD RECEIVE THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

There are currently no efficacy or safety data for children below the age of 5 years. Until such data are available, children below 5 years of age will not be offered the vaccine.

1.6. WHY SHOULD MY CHILD GET VACCINATED AGAINST COVID-19?

Vaccination can help reduce the risk of infection and severe disease in children. In general children appear to exhibit mild COVID-19 symptoms compared to adults. Although the majority of children exhibit mild symptoms when infected, some children may develop life-threatening disease and severe late complications such as Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C), and required treatment in the intensive care unit.

Vaccinating children also helps:

- Protect other family members, including siblings who are not eligible for vaccination and family member who may be at increased risk of getting very sick if they are infected;
- Reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the community; and
- Give children an added layer of protection in school or participating in sports, playdates and other group activities.

MIS-C is a rare but serious condition associated with COVID-19 in which different body parts become inflamed, including the heart, lungs, brain, skin, eyes or gastrointestinal organs.

1.7. IS IT MANDATORY FOR MY CHILD TO GET THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

No, it is not mandatory for your child to get the COVID-19 vaccine. However, it is strongly recommended for all medically eligible children aged 5 years and above to take up vaccination when this is made available to them. Being vaccinated can significantly reduce the chances of COVID-19 infection for your child and prevent severe illness, if infected. Furthermore, vaccination will also protect your family and the wider community.

1.8. WHAT IF I DON'T WANT MY CHILD TO GET COVID-19 VACCINE?

While vaccination is not mandatory, we encouraged all medically eligible individuals to take up vaccination. Being vaccinated can significantly reduce the chances of COVID-19 infection for your child and prevent severe illness, if infected. Furthermore, vaccination will also protect your family and the wider community.

1.9. CAN MY CHILD CHOOSE TO TAKE THE COVID-19 VACCINATION LATER?

Children who are not able to get vaccinated now, may do so later as long as vaccine is available, and are medically eligible to do so at that point in time. All medically eligible individuals are encouraged to take up vaccination as soon as possible. The risk of community spread remains and comprehensive coverage of COVID-19 vaccination can help protect individuals as well as the wider community against the virus.

2. WHAT SHOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT THE COVID-19 VACCINE FOR CHILDREN.

2.1. IS THE COVID-19 VACCINE SAFE AND EFFECTIVE FOR CHILDREN?

The Technical Committee on COVID-19 vaccination, Ministry of Health has reviewed the safety and efficacy of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (paediatric formulation) based on the clinical trials for children aged 5 to 11 years. Clinical trials have shown COVID-19 vaccines to be remarkably safe and effective for children and that benefits of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine outweigh the risks.

The safety profile of the vaccine in the younger population is consistent with that in the population aged 12 and above, and the standards set for other registered vaccines used in the immunisation against other disease. Common side effects in children who received the vaccine were generally mild to moderate, which resolve on their own within a few days.

Safety data reported from other countries after routine use of the paediatric dose of Pfizer BioNTech vaccine confirms the finding of lower rates of all reactions when compared to a full dose in older children and young people.

2.2. DOES COVID-19 VACCINE CAUSE MYOCARDITIS AND PERICARDITIS?

In very rare cases, myocarditis and pericarditis can occur, predominantly in male adolescents and young adults below 30 years old. However, these cases are usually mild and recover well. During clinical trials, no cases of myocarditis occurred in children ages 5 to 11 years who received the COVID-19 vaccine.

The risk of heart complications, including myocarditis, is much greater after COVID-19 infection than after vaccination.

Myocarditis is a heart muscle inflammation and pericarditis is an inflammation of the fibrous sac surrounding the heart. Patients often present with symptoms such as chest pain, shortness of breath or abnormal heartbeats.

2.3. WILL THE COVID-19 VACCINE AFFECT MY CHILD'S FERTILITY?

COVID-19 vaccines do not cause infertility, and there is no evidence to suggest that the mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccines can cause infertility.

2.4. WHAT IS THE DOSAGE FOR CHILDREN AGED 5 TO 11 YEARS?

The recommended schedule is two (2) doses of the paediatric formulation, with an interval of at least 21 days between the doses. One dose of paediatric formulation is 10 mcg (0.2 ml).

It will be given as an injection into the muscle of your child's upper arm.

2.5. IF MY CHILD TURNS 12 ON THE DAY OF THE FIRST APPOINTMENT, WHICH DOSAGE WILL MY CHILD RECEIVE?

Children who turn 12 on the day of their first appointment will receive the dose for ages 12 and above. If a child turns from 11 to 12 years of age in between their first and second dose, the second dose should be the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for people 12 years and older. However, if the child receives the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5 through 11 for their second dose, they do not need to repeat the dose.

2.6. MY CHILD IS TURNING 12 IN A FEW WEEKS' TIME. SHOULD I WAIT UNTIL MY CHILD TURNS 12 AND RECEIVE THE DOSAGE FOR 12 AND ABOVE, OR SHOULD I BRING MY CHILD TO GET VACCINATION NOW AND GET THE PAEDIATRIC DOSAGE?

Ministry of Health encourages parents to get their medically eligible children vaccinated as soon as possible. For children nearing their 12th birthday and desire to receive the adult dose, they have the choice to wait until after their birthday to do so.

2.7. CAN MY CHILD JUST TAKE ONE DOSE OF THE VACCINE?

Two doses of the vaccine are required to achieve optimal protection against COVID-19.

2.8. DOES MY CHILD NEED A BOOSTER DOSE?

There is currently no evidence on the need for booster doses of the vaccine after the two-dose schedule is complete in children aged 5-11 years. The Ministry of Health will closely monitor evolving situation and evidence on COVID-19 vaccination requirements and will update the public from time to time.

2.9. WHO SHOULD NOT GET VACCINATED?

Your child should not get vaccinated if your child:

- Has history of severe allergic reaction (e.g. anaphylaxis) after a previous dose or to a component of the COVID-19 vaccine
- Known diagnosed allergy to a component of the vaccine
- Has history of myocarditis or pericarditis after the first dose

Precaution:

If your child has a history of allergy (including anaphylaxis) to medications, food, insect bite or unknown triggers, they can still be safely vaccinated. However, they may need to be observed longer after their vaccination or they need to be vaccinated in a hospital.

People who have a history of myocarditis or pericarditis unrelated to mRNA COVID-19 vaccination may receive any COVID-19 vaccine after the episode of myocarditis or pericarditis has completely resolved.

People with weakened immune systems, either from illness or medication, may still receive the vaccine because it is not a live vaccine.

If your child has a medical condition that is not stable or is getting worse, he/she should postpone seeking the COVID-19 vaccination until his/her medical condition is better controlled. If your child has cancer and is on active chemotherapy, you should consult your child's cancer specialist to discuss if or when your child can be vaccinated.

Parents are always encouraged to speak with their child's doctor/paediatrician if they have any questions or concerns.

2.10. IF MY CHILD ALREADY HAD COVID-19 AND RECOVERED, DOES MY CHILD STILL NEED TO GET VACCINATED WITH A COVID-19 VACCINE?

Yes, your child should be vaccinated regardless of whether he/she already had COVID-19 because:

- Not everyone develops a strong immune response (protection) after having COVID-19 infection – studies show the strength and length of protection from having COVID-19 varies greatly; and
- Vaccination is the best way to help develop immunity and provides more reliable and better protection than COVID-19 infection

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is also a safer way to build protection than getting sick with COVID-19. Although COVID-19 tends to cause mild illness in most children, some children especially those with underlying medical conditions, can get severely ill from COVID-19.

3. WHAT TO PREPARE BEFORE THE VACCINATION.

3.1. DOES MY CHILD NEED PARENTAL CONSENT TO RECEIVE THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

Yes, children below the age of 18 will require the consent of their parents/guardians before they can receive the vaccine.

3.2. WHERE CAN MY CHILD GET THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

Your child can get the vaccination through BruHealth app booking or walk-in at the following vaccination centres:

- Brunei-Muara : Indoor Stadium, Hassanal Bolkiah National Sport Complex
Vaccination Centre
: UBD COVID-19 Vaccination Centre (date to be confirmed)
: Jubli Emas Bunut Health Centre
- Tutong : Seri Kenangan Hall, Pekan Tutong
- Belait : Learning Development Centre, Suri Seri Begawan Hospital
- Temburong : Belalong Community Hall, Temburong

3.3. CAN MY CHILD TAKE FEVER/PAIN MEDICINE BEFORE TAKING THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

If there are no side effects present, there is no reason to pre-medicate your child before or right after the vaccination. Hence, it is not recommended to give your child over-the-counter medicine, e.g. paracetamol or ibuprofen, before vaccination just to prevent vaccine-related side effects.

Similarly, it is not recommended to give your child antihistamines before getting a COVID-19 vaccine to prevent allergic reactions.

3.4. CAN MY CHILD GET VACCINATED WHILE HE/SHE CURRENTLY SICK WITH COVID-19?

No. People with COVID-19 (purple code in Bruhealth app) should wait to be vaccinated until they have recovered from their illness and have completed their isolation period before getting vaccinated.

People who have had a known COVID-19 exposure (red code in Bruhealth app) should not seek vaccination until their isolation period is ended to avoid potentially exposing healthcare personnel and others during the vaccination visit.

3.5. HOW SOON AFTER MY CHILD WAS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 THAT HE/SHE CAN RECEIVE THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

People with COVID-19 infection should wait 6 weeks after the date of first diagnosed or 4 weeks after they have recovered from their illness before getting vaccinated.

3.6. CAN MY CHILD GET ANOTHER VACCINE (SUCH AS ROUTINE CHILDHOOD VACCINE AND FLU VACCINE) AT THE SAME TIME AS COVID-19 VACCINE?

A minimum interval of 14 days is recommended before or after any other vaccine.

4. WHAT YOU SHOULD DO ON THE DAY OF VACCINATION.

4.1. WILL PARENTS/GUARDIANS BE ALLOWED TO ACCOMPANY THEIR CHILD TO THE VACCINATION CENTRE?

Yes. Only one parent/guardian is allowed to accompany their child to the vaccination centre to avoid congestion and ensure compliance to the Standard Operating Procedure of the vaccination centres.

4.2. WHAT DOCUMENTATION DO I NEED TO BRING OR TAKE NOTE WHEN BRINGING MY CHILD TO THE VACCINATION CENTRE?

Please bring the following documentation during your child's appointment:

- Completed consent form, health screening form and flu desk screening form (these are available in vaccination centres);
- Bru-HIMS Hospital card (BN number); and
- Any form of identification, such as photocopy of birth certificate or passport

Prior to vaccination, parents should ensure that their child is hydrated, has eaten (or eat sahur during Ramadhan) and avoids strenuous exercise. Children are encouraged to wear short-sleeved or loose clothes for their vaccination appointment.

4.3. MY CHILD HAS NOT REGISTERED WITH Bru-HIMS, DOES MY CHILD NEED TO REGISTER BEFORE GETTING THE VACCINATION?

Yes. In order to ensure the smooth running of the vaccination process during your child's appointment, it is mandatory that you register your child with Bru-HIMS earlier. You can access the form at the link below. And please bring the completed form to the nearest Health Centre (**non-flu designated clinic**) for registration.

Download the registration form via the link: <https://bit.ly/3GsHG5W>

The designated flu clinics are:

- Berakas Health Centre
- Pengkalan Batu Health Centre
- Sungai Kelugos Health Centre

4.4. CAN MY CHILD BE VACCINATED IF HE/SHE IS ILL ON THE DAY OF VACCINATION?

No. If your child is unwell on the day of his appointment, please wait until he/she recovers from his/her illness.

4.5. I HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE COVID-19 VACCINATION OR BOOSTER DOSE, CAN I TAKE THE VACCINATION TOGETHER WITH MY CHILD?

Yes. However, it is best that you get your COVID-19 vaccination or booster dose as soon as possible. Getting yourself vaccinated early can help protect your immediate family members, close friends, relative and wider community.

5. WHAT TO TAKE NOTE AFTER THE VACCINATION.

5.1. IS THERE ANYTHING THAT MY CHILD SHOULD AVOID AFTER RECEIVING THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

Given the emerging data on the small risk of myocarditis and pericarditis observed after vaccination with mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, the Technical Committee on COVID-19 vaccination recommends that all vaccinated persons, in particular adolescents and younger men, should avoid strenuous physical activity for two weeks after their first and second vaccination doses.

In line with the Technical Committee's recommendation, **children aged 5 to 11 years should also avoid strenuous physical activity for two weeks** after their first and second doses.

Examples (non-exhaustive) of strenuous physical activity to avoid are:

- Swimming
- Cycling
- Running
- Lifting heavy weights

- Competitive sports
- Ball/racket games

During this time, parents/guardians should seek medical attention promptly if their child develops chest pain, shortness of breath or abnormal heartbeats.

5.2. WHAT SIDE EFFECTS WILL MY CHILD EXPERIENCE AFTER VACCINATION?

The side effects observed in children are similar to that in the adult population, and your child may experience more side effects after the second dose of vaccination. Reported side effects were mild and similar to those experienced after routine vaccines, which should resolve in a few days.

The table below lists some common side effects that have been reported with the vaccine, and how to manage them:

Side effects	How to Manage
Pain, redness and swelling at the injection site	Paracetamol can be administered for fever and pain as according to their weight
Headache, muscle pain and joint pain	
Fever and chills	
Tiredness	Rest
Lymph node swelling at neck or arms	Usually gets better by itself in a week or so

5.3. WHEN SHOULD I BRING MY CHILD TO SEE A DOCTOR?

You should bring your child to see a doctor if:

- The side effects persist for more than 48 hours or get worse;
- Your child develops heart or chest problems such as cough, runny nose, sore throat, loss of sense of taste and smell, shortness or breath, chest pain or abnormal heart beats.

In rare cases, this vaccine can cause a severe allergic reaction. Signs of a severe allergic reaction include difficulties in breathing, swelling of face, throat, eyes or lips, fast heartbeat, dizziness and weakness, a bad rash all over the body. If your child experiences a severe allergic reaction, seek medical attention immediately. Please call 991 or seek emergency treatment immediately.

REFERENCES:

- COVID-19 Vaccination for Children, United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Vaccines for children: COVID-19, Canada Government: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/vaccination-children/covid-19.html>
- Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada: https://sogc.org/common/Uploaded%20files/Latest%20News/EN_SOGCStatement_COVID-19Vaccination-Fertility.pdf
- Evidence-based Immunization Information and Tools for B.C Residents: <https://immunizebc.ca/covid-19-vaccination-children-5-11-years-old>
- COVID-19 Child Vaccination, Ministry of Health Singapore: <https://www.moh.gov.sg/covid-19/vaccination/faqs---children-related-vaccination-matters>