

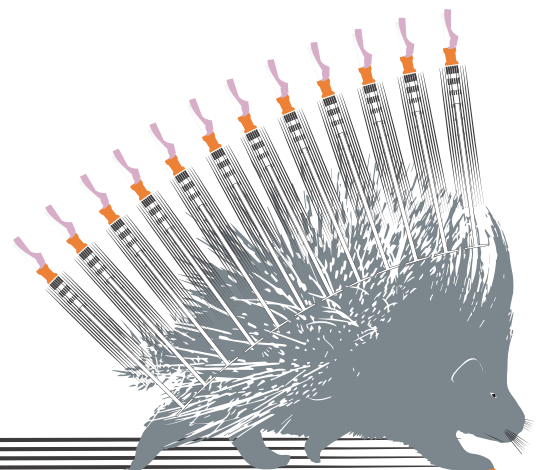
#SharingMedicine

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Nations Unite. Respect the Virus.

# MAAD'OOKIING MSHKIKI SHARING MEDICINE

## First Nations, Inuit & Métis Perspectives & Knowledge Sharing on COVID-19 Vaccines

Family as the Central Fire: Pregnancy,  
Breast/Chestfeeding & Vaccine Q&A Kids 5-11



## CARRYING LIFE, BIRTHING AND/OR RAISING A FAMILY DURING A PANDEMIC

Information about COVID-19 and the impact of the disease on pregnancy are evolving. As we face the uncertainty of COVID-19, while carrying life, birthing and/or raising a family, it is important to continue to **honour what our ancestors have taught us**. As protectors of your family, you may have questions about the new COVID-19 vaccine(s) - Connect to Medicine People, Birth Doulas, Midwives, Traditional Practitioners, Indigenous Clinicians and Elders for continuing conversations about the vaccine and the decision-making process in your family.

### How to be healthy in mind, body and spirit during pregnancy?

The COVID-19 Vaccination protects you from COVID-19 by working with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the SARS-CoV-2 virus if you are exposed it. This is one part of building a healthy immune system for you and your baby. Talk to your health care provider for other ways to stay healthy in mind, body and spirit. Traditional Healers and Elders also have knowledge to help you strengthen your mind, body and spirit during stressful times.

### Is being vaccinated against COVID safe during pregnancy or while breast/chestfeeding?

- Vaccines for use in Canada were approved following a rigorous review of evidence by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) to ensure they met the standards of safety, quality and that they work to protect us.
- If you are breastfeeding, you should get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as it is your turn.
- None of the current COVID-19 vaccines have live virus in them. This means there is no risk of you transmitting COVID-19 to your baby through your breastmilk from the vaccine.
  - The antibodies you get after vaccination go through your breast milk and help to protect your baby.
- Pregnancy is a risk factor for severe illness due to COVID-19 similar to the influenza virus/flu but more serious (than the influenza virus/flu).
- Most people would benefit from receiving the vaccine, as the risk of not getting vaccinated may outweigh the potential risk of being vaccinated during pregnancy.
- There's no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause fertility problems.
- Health Canada will continue to monitor the safety of the vaccines now and into the future.

## WESTERN SCIENCE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- NACI and the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) recommend that people who are pregnant or breast/chestfeeding should be offered a complete vaccine series with the COVID-19 vaccine if they are part of the recommended age group.
- It is important you have the information you need to make an informed decision. Shared decision making with your health care provider that aligns with your own values will include **weighing the known benefits and risks**.

## If I am planning on getting pregnant within a year, should I avoid the COVID-19 vaccine?

According to NACI, with limited data, it is recommended to delay pregnancy by 28 days or more after the administration of the complete two-dose vaccine series of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine to ensure maximum efficacy.

## Why is it important to get my child vaccinated?

Although we know that children usually have milder symptoms, it is still possible that children can have severe symptoms and be hospitalized. Some children have died because of COVID too. Also, the vaccine helps prevent spread from children to their family and community. This is especially important for those in our communities who are more vulnerable including Elders and those with weak immune systems. It is the best way that we can help keep our families and communities safe and healthy.

## If kids don't get terribly sick from COVID, why should I vaccinate my child?

There are still children who get very sick from COVID, including previously healthy kids. We can't always predict which child will have mild symptoms and which will have severe symptoms. The best way to protect your child and the people around them is by vaccinating them.

## Is the adult COVID-19 vaccine the same for children?

Yes, but it is at a smaller dose compared to what is given to an older child or adult (12+ years). Otherwise, it is the same mRNA vaccine. Children in Canada right now are only licensed to get the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.

## Are the ingredients in the COVID-19 vaccine safe for kids?

Yes. There are a few rare situations where a child may have an allergy to a component of the COVID-19 vaccine, but otherwise the ingredients are safe. The manufacturer of the vaccine, Pfizer, completed a trial with nearly 4,700 children aged 5-11, to make sure it was safe and effective. Millions of older children and adults have received the same vaccine safely.

## Could my child get COVID-19 from a COVID-19 vaccine?

No, because the COVID-19 vaccine does not contain a live virus. It does contain mRNA that creates an 'immune response' which helps your body recognize COVID-19 if it is exposed. Sometimes the side effects after a COVID-19 vaccine can look like your child is getting a viral infection, but it is the body's way of creating that good 'immune response' bodies need during these times.

## After the vaccination, what are the possible side effects?

Most commonly, the side effects are pain and redness at the spot where the vaccine is given. Some children and adults also say they feel tired, have a headache, have muscle aches, or develop a fever. This is part of the 'immune response' that we expect.

There are very rare cases of inflammation of the heart or around the heart (called myocarditis or pericarditis) or a nerve weakness in the face (called Bell's Palsy).

## What is myocarditis/pericarditis and how is it related to the covid vaccine my child is getting?

Myocarditis is inflammation of the muscle of the heart. Pericarditis is inflammation of the layer of tissue that surrounds the heart. Myocarditis and pericarditis are conditions that we see in all age groups even before COVID-19 or COVID-19 vaccines. Children often present with chest pain, fast or slow heartbeat, or difficulty breathing, and different tests done in hospitals help to diagnose myocarditis or pericarditis. Rarely, myocarditis or pericarditis can be severe, but the almost all resolve over time with no lasting heart problems. In fact, it is often treated Advil or Naproxen to help reduce the inflammation and pain.

After mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) were being used across the world, there were rare reports of myocarditis and pericarditis in people who received these vaccines. This side effect was seen more commonly shortly after the second dose, in adolescents and young adults, and more commonly in males. Also, cases were generally mild and resolved rapidly.

The benefits of receiving the vaccine, such as preventing illness and keeping those around us safe, still outweigh the possible side effects of the vaccine.

**NOTE:** Routine immunization programs and immunization with other vaccines recommended by NACI should continue during the COVID-19 pandemic with public health strategies to decrease the risks of COVID-19 transmission during the immunization process as outlined in the [Interim guidance on continuity of immunization programs during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

## What are my rights?

You have the right to make an informed decision about COVID-19 vaccination.

You have a right to weigh the risks and benefits.

### FOR EXAMPLE:

Individuals who are pregnant, breast/chestfeeding or are of reproductive age may be at increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 (e.g., healthcare, or essential workers) and/or at increased risk of severe COVID-19 disease (e.g., due to pre-existing medical condition, body mass index of 40 or more) and may wish to be vaccinated despite in order to protect themselves and their community.

## My child is currently 4 but will turn 5 by the end of 2021. Are they eligible for the vaccine?

Yes, all children who are turning 5 by the end of 2021 are eligible right now.

## My child is currently 11 but will turn 12 by the end of 2021. What dose do they get?

All children who are turning 12 by the end of 2021 are eligible for the adult (12+) dose.

## My child is currently 11 and will turn 12 in 2022. Should they wait until they turn 12 so they get the bigger dose?

We recommend that all children get the vaccine that they are eligible for as soon as possible and not wait. The studies on the smaller child dose (5-11 years old) had a similar efficacy compared to the larger adult dose (12+ years old).

## What are the long-term effects of the vaccine on my child's system? More specifically their reproductive system?

The COVID-19 vaccine is a type of mRNA vaccine, which scientists have been researching for decades including vaccines made for the flu and other viruses. This research has shown no long-term side effects for this type of vaccine, including any effect on fertility. Plus, the information we have from the specific COVID-19 vaccine so far shows that the vaccine is safe as scientists have predicted.

What we do know is that there is a risk of having long term health problems after having a COVID-19 infection, including lung damage and 'long COVID.' Getting vaccinated helps reduce the risk of getting a COVID-19 infection and having these long-term side effects.

## RESOURCES / MORE INFORMATION:

1. [Centre for Effective Practice: COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
2. [Health Canada](#)
3. [National Aboriginal Council of Midwives – COVID-19](#)
4. [SOGC Statement on COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnancy-UPDATED 2021](#)
5. [Pregnancy, Childbirth, Newborns: Prevention, Infection & Risks Related to COVID-19](#)
6. [WHO Q&A](#)
7. [National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health](#)
8. [First Nations Health Authority](#)
9. [COVID-19 Indigenous](#)
10. [National Association of Friendship Centres](#)