

# JCVI updates advice on vaccinations for 5 to 11 age group



Although this age group is generally at very low risk of serious illness from the virus, a very small number of children who get infected do develop severe disease.

Latest evidence suggests that offering the vaccine ahead of another potential wave will protect this very small number of children from serious illness and hospitalisation – and will also provide some short-term protection against mild infection across the age group.

The committee has therefore advised a non-urgent offer to all 5 to 11 year olds of 2 (10mcg) doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech paediatric vaccine. The 2 doses should be given with an interval of at least 12 weeks between doses.

The recommendation should not displace the delivery of other non-COVID-19 childhood vaccinations, or any other part of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Uptake of some non-COVID-19 childhood vaccination programmes, such as MMR and HPV vaccinations, have been affected by the pandemic. The committee has advised that the addition of a COVID-19 vaccine rollout to this age group should not impact the recovery of these programmes.

Professor Wei Shen Lim, Chair of COVID-19 immunisation on the JCVI, said:

The committee has carefully considered the potential direct health impacts of vaccination and potential indirect educational impacts.

The main purpose of offering vaccination to 5 to 11 year olds is to increase their protection against severe illness in advance of a potential future wave of COVID-19.

Other important childhood vaccinations, such as MMR and HPV, have fallen behind due to the pandemic. It is vital these programmes continue and are not displaced by the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine to this age group.

## Background

In December, the JCVI recommended the vaccine be offered to at-risk 5 to 11 year olds – the rollout of which officially began at the beginning of February.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England will advise on their plans for operationalising the latest JCVI recommendations in due course.

Parents are urged not to contact the NHS until further details have been set out.

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