

HSE NATIONAL IMMUNISATION OFFICE

IMMUNISATION BULLETIN 59

THIS EDITION COVERS

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COVID-19 vaccine

HSE offers COVID-19 bivalent booster to people aged 12-64 at high risk of serious illness

From Tuesday, 24th January 2023, the HSE has begun to contact people aged 12 to 64 years with a medical condition that puts them at high risk of serious illness from COVID-19 to offer them a third COVID-19 booster dose if the second booster they received was not a bivalent adapted vaccine.

NIAC Advice

Authorised bivalent mRNA vaccines are preferentially recommended for all those aged 12 years and older (30 years and older for Spikevax bivalent mRNA vaccines) eligible for a booster vaccination.

An interval of four to six months is recommended from the time of the last COVID-19 vaccine or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection. In exceptional circumstances, an interval of three months may be used (e.g., in a person scheduled to commence chemotherapy).

New mRNA COVID-19 vaccine formulations for people aged 6 months to 4 years (NOT YET OPERATIONALISED)

In October 2022 the European Medicines Agency (EMA) approved formulations of Comirnaty and Spikevax mRNA vaccines for use in those aged 6 months to 4 years inclusive.

Paediatric formulations of Spikevax are not available in Ireland.

Summary of NIAC recommendations for vaccination in those aged 6 months to 4 years

In October 2022 the European Medicines Agency (EMA) approved formulations of Comirnaty and Spikevax mRNA vaccines for use in those aged 6 months to 4 years inclusive.

Paediatric formulations of Spikevax are not available in Ireland.

- Since the beginning of the pandemic over 3,500 children were hospitalised with COVID-19 in Ireland. Of that number, 1,075 were aged 6 months to 4 years; they accounted for over a third of paediatric ICU (PICU) admissions, 72% (18/25) of which occurred during the Omicron wave. Since 1 September 2022, there has been a downward trend in COVID-19 cases, hospitalisations and ICU admissions in all age groups.
- In clinical trials, the immune response of children aged 6 months to 4 years to the recommended lower doses of the vaccines was comparable to that in adolescents and young adults who received higher doses.
- Although the risk of hospitalisation is higher in those with underlying conditions, internationally 50-97% of hospitalised children in this age group had no known risk factor for severe disease. In Ireland, 53% of COVID-19 Paediatric ICU admissions had no underlying condition.
- Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) is a rare complication after symptomatic or asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection that affects children as young as three months of age. COVID-19 vaccination has been shown to reduce the risk of MIS-C in older children and adolescents and similar benefit is expected in this age group.
- Vaccine benefit is most evident for children with underlying conditions for whom the risk of severe COVID-19 is greatest.
- In the context of the current epidemiology, high seroprevalence and declining infection rates, the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination for the healthy child are more nuanced and are influenced by history and timing of previous infection as well as the need to minimise risks of COVID-19 within a household.

NIAC recommendations continue on page 3



New mRNA COVID-19 vaccine formulations for people aged 6 months to 4 years (NOT YET OPERATIONALISED)

Summary of NIAC recommendations for vaccination in those aged 6 months to 4 years (cont. from page 2)

In this age group, NIAC therefore supports recommending COVID-19 vaccination for those:

1. With underlying conditions that place them at higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease (See Table 5a.2 Chapter 5a Immunisation Guidelines available at RCPI website: <https://www.rcpi.ie/Healthcare-Leadership/NIAC/Immunisation-Guidelines-for-Ireland>)
2. COVID-19 vaccination should be offered to all others in this age group based on:
 - The protection provided by the vaccine against severe COVID-19 disease and Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) and their late consequences
 - Comparable immunogenicity to that in older children and adolescents
 - The enhanced protection vaccination gives to those who have had COVID-19 infection
 - The modest benefit in reducing household transmission to those immunocompromised or too young for vaccination.

Schedule

Comirnaty (3 micrograms/dose) requires dilution and is administered intramuscularly as a primary course of three 0.2ml doses with an interval of three weeks between dose one and two and at least eight weeks between dose two and three.

Volume/dose: 0.2 mls.

There is currently no recommendation for additional or boosters in this age group, including those with immunocompromise.

This programme for children aged 6 months to 4 years will not be operationalised until mid-February 2023 when the vaccine will be available from CVCs only.

For more information, read more [here](#).

See **Table 5a.1 of NIAC Chapter 5a COVID-19 for 'Recommendations for COVID-19 vaccines by age and immune status January 2023'** now available on the new RCPI site:

<https://www.rcpi.ie/Healthcare-Leadership/NIAC/Immunisation-Guidelines-for-Ireland>

Chapter 5a COVID-19

Table 5a.1 Recommendations for COVID-19 vaccines by age and immune status January 2023

Group	Primary course ¹	Additional dose	Booster			
			1 st	2 nd	3 rd	
65 years and older	2 doses		✓	✓	✓	
50-64 years	2 doses		✓	✓	✓ ²	
12-49 years	Underlying medical conditions	2 doses	✓	✓	✓ ²	
	Residents of long term care facilities	2 doses	✓	✓		
	Healthcare workers	2 doses	✓	✓		
18-49 years	2 doses		✓	✓ ³		
12-17 years			Not in other groups	✓		
Pregnancy	2 doses		✓	✓ ⁴		
5-11 years	2 doses					
6 months-4 years	3 doses					
12 years and older	2 doses	✓	✓	✓	✓	
5-11 years						Immunocompromised associated with a sub optimal response to vaccines
6 months-4 years						3 doses

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¹ Two dose primary course (one dose if JCOVDEN), three dose primary course if aged 6 months-4 years

² Those aged 12-64 years with an underlying medical condition who have not received a bivalent booster vaccine

³ Healthy people aged 18-49 years may choose to receive an additional COVID-19 booster vaccine if there is at least a six month interval since their previous vaccine dose or SARS-CoV-2 infection

⁴ At 16 weeks gestation or later if not already boosted in this pregnancy

Further resources and materials to support this programme implementation - COMING SOON

- **Clinical Guidelines V46.** Will be available at: please click [here](#).
- **FAQs.** Will be available at: please click [here](#).
- **SOP.** Will be available at: please click [here](#).
- **Medicine Protocol.** Will be available at: please click [here](#).
- **Consent information.** Will be available at: please click [here](#).

The HSEland programme will be available towards the end of next week from www.hseland.ie

New home for NIAC Immunisation Guidelines for Ireland

The RCPI National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) Immunisation Guidelines for Ireland have moved to the RCPI website: <https://www.rcpi.ie/Healthcare-Leadership/NIAC/Immunisation-Guidelines-for-Ireland>

In January NIAC have issued updates to:

- Chapter 3 - Immunisation of Immunocompromised Persons
- Chapter 5a - COVID-19

We will be updating our materials with the new RCPI weblink. Please be patient as we progress this piece of work.

Update your bookmarks to the new RCPI weblink.

Medicine Protocols for catch-up vaccination of migrant communities

Medicine Protocols for the administration of vaccines by registered nurses and registered midwives to Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP) and International Protection Applicants (IPA) in Ireland and in the event of an outbreak are available from our website.

Read more [here](#).

The protocols support vaccination of Boostrix (Tdap), DTaP IPV Tetravac, Infanrix Hexa (6 in 1), MMR Priorix, MMRVaxPro, Revaxis (Td/IPV), Menjugate (Meningococcal Group C), Nimenrix (MenACWY) vaccine, Rotarix (Rotavirus oral vaccine), Prevenar 13 vaccine (PCV13), Bexsero (Meningococcal group B), Menitorix (Hib/MenC).

Flu

A reminder that the LAIV (nasal flu vaccine) programme has finished for this flu season.

All remaining stock of LAIV vaccine is past the expiry date and therefore should not be administered. All LAIV vaccine and should be removed from your fridge and returned to NCCS for destruction at your next vaccine delivery from the cold chain.

Children aged 2-17 years who were eligible for LAIV can still receive the QIV flu vaccine given by intramuscular injection if they have medical conditions, which put them at risk of serious illness from flu.

For the latest updates and information on the programme, visit www.hse.ie/flu

Lunch and Learn: HPV Vaccine on 24th January 2023

The NIO hosted the first Lunch and Learn of 2023 and covered the **HPV Vaccine** and the **Laura Brennan HPV Vaccine Catch-Up Programme**.

- You can watch the lunch and learn from: <https://youtu.be/YzoPXj23WMs>
- You can also listen to the session on Spotify. Please click [here](#).
- You can view the slides presented at the session at: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/hcpinfo/conference/>

We plan to host a lunch and learn session each month.

To sign up to mailing list for next session [here](#).
To remove yourself from the mailing list, click [here](#).



Website



Visit website [here](#).

Visit our website www.immunisation.ie regularly for information to support vaccinators and health professionals responding to queries.

HSeLanD Vaccination Training Programme



Visit HSeLanD [here](#).

You will find programmes developed by our office by logging into your account on www.hseland.ie selecting **courses** then selecting **clinical skills** and finally selecting **National Immunisation Office**.



Contact HSeLanD [here](#).

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

Do you have queries?



Send your query [here](#).

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

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

- Cliona Kiersey: mobile 087 9915452
- Achal Gupta: mobile 087 4064810

If you have a query about errors or changes to records on COVAX, please contact the Contact Management Programme on 01 240 8786.

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



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