



Information concerning the vaccination against COVID-19

The vaccination against COVID-19 is recommended by the federal and cantonal health authorities for 3 reasons:

- 1. The vaccination protects vulnerable people and reduces the number of seriously ill patients and deaths from COVID-19.**
- 2. The vaccination will lead to fewer hospitalisations and ensure the maintenance of a properly functioning health care system for everyone.**
- 3. The vaccination will assist in the fight to address the negative social and economic consequences of this pandemic.**

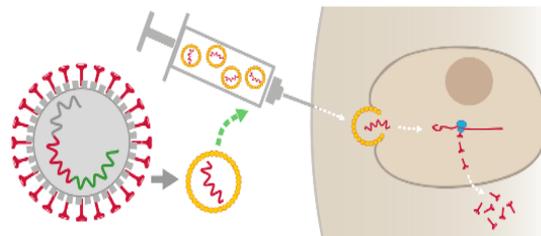
Why is it important to get vaccinated against COVID-19?

A coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) infection is most often a less severe form of COVID-19 for adults and children. The illness is more often worse for the elderly or people with an underlying health condition (obesity, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular or pulmonary disease, cancer, immunosuppressive diseases and the treatment of them). COVID-19 can cause severe complications and consequences, requiring long-term hospitalisation and, in some cases, the need for intensive care. COVID-19 can also be fatal. This is why it is therefore important to get vaccinated.

What are the vaccines? How do they work?

Switzerland has chosen to make the vaccines created by two enterprises, Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna, available to its population. Studies that have been carried out on these vaccines show that they are the most effective. The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine was approved by Swissmedic on 19th December 2020.

This vaccine contains a part of the genetic segment of the coronavirus called “messenger RNA” or “mRNA”. The RNA code is found in tiny droplets of fat. The messenger RNA instructs cells to create a harmless piece of protein, which resembles the outside layer of the coronavirus. When the immune system encounters this protein piece, it recognizes that it does not belong there, and therefore creates the antibodies to fight it. Through this process, our immune system is then prepared in case of infection and our bodies will be able to rapidly eliminate any coronavirus encountered. The messenger RNA injected with the vaccine is broken down and disappears completely after 1 – 2 days.



Source : Infovac 22.12.2020

What proof is there of the safety and effectiveness of these new vaccines?

Many studies have been carried out to test the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines. These studies were carried out in accordance with international standards. They have taken place in many different countries and thousands of people agreed to participate in this research. These studies have shown:

- Verification that the vaccines aren't dangerous for our health (safety);
- Evidence that the vaccines protect us from the COVID-19 illness (effectiveness):
For each 100 persons vaccinated with two doses, 95 of them avoided any infection when exposed to the virus. The 5 people who were infected only developed a mild form of the illness.

Based on these studies, Swissmedic approved of these vaccines. To be most effective two doses of the vaccine are necessary with an interval of one month between each dose.

What are the risks of these new vaccines?

The vaccines cannot cause COVID-19. Like most vaccines, these new ones can have mild side-effects. Such effects can appear on the day of vaccination or the day after. A few examples of some these are:

- Slight discomfort around the area of injection
- Tiredness
- Headaches
- Stiffness
- Other mild forms of inflammatory reactions caused by the activation of the immune system.

These reactions are normal and not dangerous. They may last between 1 and 3 days. They can be treated with paracetamol and do not need medical care.

Serious side effects, such as an allergic reaction in response to the vaccine, are rare. These reactions are also easy to treat.

Who is considered a priority for the vaccine?

The vaccine is considered a priority for those most at risk of complications if they were to get the COVID-19, for example:

- People older than 65 years old;
- People with an underlying health condition (obesity, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular or pulmonary disease, cancer, people with immunosuppressed diseases or who are under immunosuppressive treatment)

The rest of the adult population will have access to the vaccine as more supplies become available.

Children and adolescents are, for the moment, excluded from the vaccination for 2 reasons:

- Information concerning the safety of the vaccine for this age group is not yet available.
- They do not develop a serious form of the illness.

For whom is the vaccine not recommended?

There are some people who would be advised to not receive a vaccination (in medical terms it is "contraindicated"). These people would be:

- Those who have had a previous serious allergic reaction to any vaccine or its composites.
- Pregnant women – there is not enough information at the moment concerning any side-effects on the pregnancy.

Other people who may have to wait before getting vaccinated include:

- People who have had COVID-19 recently. It is recommended to wait three months after the start of any symptoms to get vaccinated.
- People who have an acute illness (fever, etc..).

How long does the vaccine protect from COVID-19?

Protection from COVID-19 starts two weeks after the first injection. Maximum protection is achieved one week after the second injection.

The full length of on-going protection is not yet known. It could be somewhere between a few months and a few years. The effectiveness of the vaccine will be more certain once it has been tested on populations that have not been included in phases two and three of the trials. A booster vaccine might be necessary after one, two, three, five or ten years.

How much does it cost to get vaccinated against COVID-19?

Vaccinations against COVID-19 are free. The costs are covered by health insurance (with no excess chargeable), the cantons and the State. Vaccination is not subject to any deductible or part-payment.

Where and when is it possible to get vaccinated?

Vulnerable people - people older than 65 years old (initially those over the age of 75 will be a priority) will be contacted for the first vaccinations. As and when greater quantities of the vaccine are received, it will be made available to the wider population. Vaccination centres will open in the near future.

The Federal Office of Public Health, the Federal Commission for Vaccinations, cantonal doctors, the Swiss societies of doctors and specialists recommend the vaccine. Do not hesitate to discuss this with your doctor.

For more information

All information can be found on the website www.ge.ch as well as www.infovac.ch and www.ofsp-coronavirus.ch/vaccination

You can also call **0800 909 400** with any questions you may have.

Source: Infovac and OFSP