COVID-19 vaccinations at schools

Dear guardians and pupils,

Helsinki is starting the COVID-19 vaccination of children and young people aged 12–15 at schools. The vaccinations will start at Finnish-language comprehensive schools on 12 August and at Swedish-language schools on 17 August. The vaccinations at schools will not require advance registration.

The vaccination will be provided at schools to everyone aged 12–15 regardless of their municipality of residence. The booster shots will also be administered at the schools after 8–12 weeks.

The vaccinations will start at different times at different schools. The head teachers will inform the guardians about the vaccination dates through Wilma before the vaccination takes place. The vaccines will be administered by the school nurse together with health care staff.

Vaccines are also administered at vaccination points

People aged 12–15 may also get vaccinated at a vaccination point by appointment. 15-year-olds who are already studying at a general upper secondary school or a vocational institution get vaccinated at vaccination points. In such cases, the booster shot will also be administered at the vaccination point. If a guardian wants to be present during the vaccination, we ask that they book an appointment with a vaccination point.

If a child or young person is not at school when the vaccinations are being carried out, they will receive their vaccine at a vaccination point.

The easiest way to book an appointment is to visit bookcovidvaccine.fi or call the appointment booking number 09 310 46300 (weekdays 8–18). Appointment booking for vaccination points started for people aged 12–15 on Monday 9 August. Minors can book the appointment themselves. A guardian can also book the appointment for a minor.

The vaccination points in Helsinki are in Jätkäsaari, Malmi, Messukeskus and Myllypuro.

Good to remember when coming for vaccination

It is safe to come for vaccination. Pupils will be called for vaccination in small groups so that adequate safe distances can be ensured. The following instructions should be kept in mind when coming to get vaccinated.
Remember the following:

- Do not come to school or for your vaccination if you have even mild symptoms indicative of COVID-19. Instead, you must immediately seek coronavirus testing. Common symptoms of infection include fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, muscle ache, nausea, deterioration of general health and, as a moderately common symptom, loss of the sense of smell and taste.
- Do not come for vaccination if you are quarantining.
- Dress in a way that makes is easy to access your shoulder.
- Bring an ID or Kela card with you (does not need to have a photo).
- Wear a mask when coming to get vaccinated and throughout the process, and keep a distance of at least two metres from other pupils.

Instructions for children and young people for after the vaccination

After the vaccination, you can usually resume normal behaviour. For example, you do not need to avoid exercise or going to the sauna. Like all medicines, this vaccine can have side effects. In vaccine trials, side effects in young people have been similar to those in older age groups. The most common side effects observed were mild and temporary, such as pain and redness at the injection site, headache and fever. The symptoms are most common after the second vaccination.

Possible symptoms after the vaccination include the following:

- General symptoms: headache, joint and muscle pain, fever, chills, fatigue, nausea, diarrhoea
- Local symptoms in the injection area: warmth, redness, swelling, pain, itching, rash
- There may be local swelling of the lymph nodes.

The general and local symptoms are not dangerous and usually disappear within a few days. A widespread local reaction may last longer. However, even this does not usually indicate an allergy. The general and local symptoms do not prevent you from receiving the booster shot.

Other side effects are rare. If there are any other symptoms, you should call the Coronavirus Helpline, tel. 09 310 10024 (every day 8–18). If you suspect that your symptoms require an emergency assessment, call the Medical Helpline on 116 117.
Children and young people receive mRNA vaccinations

Children and young people are vaccinated with the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine. For more information about vaccines, please visit the THL website.

A person aged 12 or over can decide on being vaccinated themselves if the health care professional administering the vaccine considers the person capable of this based on their age and level of development. If the person is unwilling or unable to decide for themselves, the consent of both guardians is required for the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine. The consent form is available on the bookcovidvaccine website: https://www.koronarokotusaika.fi/en/uudenmaan-asukkaille/.

Getting vaccinated is voluntary and free of charge. It is important that we make vaccination coverage in this age group high enough to allow children and young people to continue to attend contact instruction and participate in events and activities that are important to them.

Further information:

- How to talk to a child about COVID-19. Eight tips (UNICEF website, in Finnish)
- Frequently asked questions about coronavirus vaccinations for children and young people (THL website)
- The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) is organising a public event on coronavirus vaccinations for 12–15-year-olds on Thursday 12 August at 17:30–18:30. (Event details in Finnish.)
- For more detailed information about COVID-19 vaccinations in Helsinki, please visit koronarokotus.hel.fi.

Best regards,

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