

Providing booster vaccines at schools

Dear guardians and pupils,

At the start of the school year, Helsinki started the COVID-19 vaccinations for children and young people aged 12–15 at schools. The vaccinations started at Finnish-language comprehensive schools on 12 August and at Swedish-language schools on 18 August. Pupils attended the vaccinations actively, and about 10,700 pupils had received the vaccine at school by the end of August. At the moment, the vaccination coverage for the first vaccine among children aged 12–15 is at 72 per cent in Helsinki.

Booster vaccinations about to begin

Since 3 September, it has been possible to shorten the interval between the first and second vaccines down to six weeks. As such, the vaccination interval is 6–12 weeks at present. The administration of the second vaccine dose (booster vaccine) will start at schools at a staggered schedule, starting from 23 September. However, six weeks must have passed from the first vaccine, at the minimum.

The vaccinations at schools will not require advance registration

The second vaccine will be provided at schools to everyone aged 12–15 regardless of their municipality of residence. 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.

Pupils will also be able to receive their first vaccine during this second round if they have turned 12 since the first vaccination round. In this case, the second vaccine will be provided later at the City's vaccination point.

If a pupil has received the first vaccine at the City's vaccination point, they can receive the second vaccine at school. In this case, it is recommended that you cancel your appointment for the vaccination point.

Vaccines are also administered at vaccination points

If they have not received the vaccine at school, everyone aged 12 or older can receive both the first and second vaccine at a Helsinki vaccination point or pop-up vaccination point without appointment. At the pop-up points, the second vaccine will be available on a first come, first served basis. You can book a vaccination appointment at [Bookcovidvaccine.fi](https://bookcovidvaccine.fi) or by calling the service number, tel. +358 (0)9 310 46300 (Mon–Fri at 8:00–18:00). A guardian can also make an appointment on behalf of an underage person.

The vaccination points in Helsinki are in Jätkäsaari, Malmi, Messukeskus and Myllypuro. You can see the opening hours and more information on the vaccination points at: www.hel.fi/sote/koronarokotus-en/vaccination-points

Information about the pop-up vaccination points: www.hel.fi/sote/koronarokotus-en/vaccination-points/pop-up-vaccination-points/pop-up-vaccination-points

Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine is voluntary and free of charge. Underage persons may decide on whether or not to take the COVID-19 vaccine if a health care professional deems them capable of making the decision, based on age and developmental level. This assessment is made at the vaccination point. In the event that a young person cannot decide on the vaccination, [written consent](#) (PDF) from both parents/guardians is required for the vaccination decision.

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 have been quarantined.
- Dress in a way that makes it 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. However, it is recommended that you avoid extreme physical strain for three days from the vaccination, as a precaution. As with all medicines, the vaccine may have some 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 in the injection area, headache and fever. The symptoms are most common after the second vaccination dose.

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 harmful 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 taking the booster shot.

Other side effects are rare. If you experience any other symptoms, you should call the **Coronavirus Helpline**, tel. [+358 \(0\)9 310 10024](tel:+3580931010024) (every day 8:00–18:00). If you suspect that your symptoms require an emergency assessment, call the Medical Helpline on tel. 116 117.

Vaccination certificate

You can find your EU Digital COVID-19 Certificate via the [Omakanta service](#). The EU certificate is a statement regarding the COVID-19 vaccination, test results or a past COVID-19 infection. A person aged over 10 can download or print the certificate from Omakanta personally if they have access to strong authentication, such as online banking credentials or a mobile ID. At the moment, a guardian of an underage person aged over 10 cannot view, download or print out a child's/young person's COVID-19 certificate from Omakanta. If a child or young person aged over 10 needs a COVID-19 certificate, and they cannot download or print it out from Omakanta personally, they can pick up the certificate from a Helsinki vaccination point without appointment.

Children and young people receive mRNA vaccinations

Children and young people are vaccinated with a vaccine by Moderna or Pfizer. 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 COVID-19 vaccinations for children and young people ([THL website](#))
- For more detailed information about COVID-19 vaccinations in Helsinki, please visit koronarokotus.hel.fi.

Best regards,

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