

COVID-19 vaccination of at-risk 16-17 year olds: when, who, how and where?

When? From mid-June.

Vaccination of adult patients at high risk of severe COVID-19 was started in early May. The majority of this target group has already been invited for vaccination in a vaccination centre.

Recently, in accordance with the advice of the Higher Health Council (HGR) and the advice of the Vaccination Taskforce, it was decided to also vaccinate young people from the age of 16 with certain underlying conditions. Since, to date, only the Pfizer vaccine has been extensively tested in this age group, and has received authorisation for this age group from the European Medicines Agency (EMA), all these young people will be vaccinated with this vaccine.

Within this group, too, we work from old to young. From the day these youngsters turn 16, they can be invited. The selection of this group of young people will be made by the attending doctor-specialist paediatrician for young people who turn 16 on 1 August 2021 at the latest.

Persons at risk. Who does this concern?

Young people between the ages of 16 and 18, with a particular condition (see list below) for which there is scientific evidence that, when infected, they have a higher risk of a serious outcome of the illness, of hospitalisation or even of death due to COVID-19.

Specifically for young people with a rare condition, the focus is on the group where said condition has an impact on the cardiovascular, respiratory or neurological area.

Patients aged 16 to 18 with:

- chronic kidney disease for at least 3 months
- chronic liver disease for at least 6 months
- haematological cancers (e.g. leukaemia)
- Down syndrome
- transplant patients (including those on the waiting list)
- immune system disorders i.e. suffering from immunodeficiency or using immunosuppressants
- active HIV/AIDS
- Various rare conditions (please refer to the Orphanet list:
https://www.orpha.net/consor/cgi-bin/Disease_Search_List.php?lng=EN).

How are the lists of the high-risk patients drawn up?

In order to draw up the lists of high-risk patients, data are taken from the files of the general practitioner and the attending physician/specialist/doctor.

(1) General practitioners - in consultation with the young person - pass on the national registration number of the person with Down syndrome to the attending physician/specialist/doctor.

(2) the specialist doctors/paediatricians also list young people with rare conditions themselves.

This way, the chance that someone will be forgotten is very small. These lists are merged into one unique list in a secure central register: the 'Vaccination Codes Database'. The only information the

database contains is 'this person has an increased risk'. It does not, therefore, contain any information on the nature of this risk or on the condition.

How can young people find out if they are on the list of people at risk?

From 21 June, you can check whether you are on the list of high-risk patients yourself at www.myhealthviewer.be. You can do so using your electronic ID and PIN code. If you do not or no longer know the PIN code of your identity card, you can contact your municipality for this. Your pharmacist can also give you information on the selection of high-risk patients and review your situation with you and give you advice on this.

We therefore ask that you do not contact your doctor or paediatrician to ask the simple question: *Am I on the list?* Are you not on the list by 21 June? You can take that as a good sign. It means that you do not belong to the risk group, and that the risk of serious complications from COVID-19 infection is low for you.

What if you are not on the list, but are still at risk?

There is then a small chance that you are a high-risk patient. Do you think you belong to the risk group and don't see yourself on the list? In that case, please contact your attending physician-specialist/paediatrician. They can always add you to the list of high-risk patients if necessary, even after 21 June.

Where does the vaccination of high-risk patients take place?

Most of the vaccinations will take place in a vaccination centre. Exceptions to this are:

- Bedridden young people and/or young people with strict medical restrictions (e.g. severe psychiatric disorders, severe physical disability) who are never able to leave their place of residence under normal conditions. They are eligible for home vaccination by their general practitioner or by the mobile team of the vaccination centre.
- Chronic haemodialysis patients. They are vaccinated in their dialysis centre under the coordination of a nephrologist.

If you think you qualify for a home vaccination, contact your GP. He or she will check whether you can indeed be vaccinated at home (this may include consultation with your home care nurse), and if so, the GP, in consultation with the vaccination centre, will arrange for the home vaccination. Most general practitioners will do these home vaccinations themselves. If not, the mobile team from the vaccination centre can come and vaccinate you.