

Guideline: How can specialist doctors add young people aged 16-17 years with an increased risk of severe Covid-19 due to underlying conditions to the "Vaccination Code Database" (VCD)?

When? From 10 June.

Vaccination of adult patients at high risk of severe COVID-19 started in early May. A significant proportion were listed by referring doctors in hospitals and invited for vaccination.

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 at-risk patients from the age of 16 as a priority. Since only the Pfizer vaccine has been extensively tested among young people to date, and it has received approval from the European Medicines Agency (EMA) for this age group, we only use this vaccine for this group.

Persons at risk. Who does this concern?

People between the ages of 16 and 18, with a particular condition for which scientific research shows that they have a higher risk of a serious outcome of the illness, of hospitalisation or even of death due to COVID-19.

What does the Higher Health Council write about this group of patients with an underlying condition?

The HGR opinion of 20 May 2021

(https://www.health.belgium.be/sites/default/files/uploads/fields/fpshealth_theme_file/20210527_hgr-9655_vaccination_jongeren_covid-19_deel1_16-17_vweb.pdf) distinguishes between three levels of priority (see opinion HGR-9618, HGR-9641 and HGR-9622 for more details). In our country, we are vaccinating priority level 1 group more quickly, which means that these young people are vaccinated immediately after the high-risk group of 18-64 year olds.

These are patients between the ages of 16 and 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

The group with priority level 1 therefore includes young people with a rare condition. We would like to point out that the focus is on the group in which the rare condition has an impact on the cardiovascular, respiratory or neurological area. In order to determine which rare conditions this most commonly concerns, please refer to the Orphanet list: https://www.orpha.net/consor/cgi-bin/Disease_Search_List.php?lng=EN.

What is the best procedure to follow?

The attending specialist doctor/paediatrician provides the reference paediatrician in the hospital with the national registration number of the young person concerned before 21 June. The latter can then manually add the individual patient to the VCD via the 'Corona vaccination web app' on the e-health platform, based on the national registration number, so that the young person is called up for vaccination as a priority. The young person can use the e-ID him or herself via www.myhealthviewer.be to see whether he/she has been selected. If the PIN code of the e-ID is not known, contact the municipality.

Since young people with Down syndrome are not always actively followed up by a paediatrician, the general practitioner - in consultation with the young person - will pass on the national registration number to a paediatrician in order to add them to the risk group.

The selected young people are then vaccinated at the vaccination centre for which they receive an invitation (unless they fall under the exception of those who cannot leave their homes, and are therefore eligible for mobile vaccination at their homes).

In this way, these vulnerable young people will also be vaccinated correctly and in good time.