

Current information on coronavirus vaccination in North Rhine-Westphalia

Where can I get vaccinated?

Since 1 October 2021, the coronavirus vaccinations in North Rhine-Westphalia have been taken over primarily by general practitioners and company doctors. The first point of contact for those interested in vaccination is now usually the general practitioner. If you don't have a GP, you can find the vaccinating doctors' practices in North Rhine [here](#) and the vaccinating doctors' practices in Westphalia-Lippe [here](#) that you can contact.

In addition, the 53 districts and independent cities have established a network of decentralised vaccination centres. Here is an overview of the vaccination centres in North Rhine-Westphalia: www.impfen.nrw

In addition, there are low-threshold mobile vaccination services or vaccination campaigns all over the country.

Why is a booster vaccination important?

Anyone who gets vaccinated against Covid-19 protects themselves and also their fellow human beings and helps to slow down the further spread of the virus. The available Covid-19 vaccines protect against severe disease in particular. Although coronavirus infections cannot be entirely prevented by vaccination, people who become infected despite vaccination contribute to a lesser extent to the spread of the virus and thus reduce the risk of infection for others.

Nevertheless, recent studies show that vaccination protection against infection declines over time, especially in the very elderly or in people who have a weakened immune system. In older people, it is also the case that the overall immune response after vaccination is lower. In this case, a booster vaccination can significantly increase the vaccination protection again, e.g. in the form of antibodies. The booster vaccination acts like a booster for the immune system - which is why it is also called booster vaccination.

When is a booster vaccination recommended?

The North Rhine-Westphalian Ministry of Health currently recommends booster vaccination at **least five months apart** from the last vaccine dose of the basic immunisation. However, the following applies: Within the framework of the municipal vaccination offers, people can also be boosted whose basic vaccination was at least four months ago.

This does not affect individual decisions based on a medical indication for an earlier booster vaccination, provided that a minimum interval of four weeks has been reached here. However, such a minimum interval of four weeks is explicitly not a recommendation, but an absolute lower limit for individual case decisions. This vaccination interval is based on the current recommendation of the Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO) on COVID-19 vaccinations, according to which, for example, a booster vaccination can be administered to immunodeficient persons with an expected strongly reduced vaccination response as early as four weeks after the second vaccine dose in order to optimise the vaccination series.

Who can receive a booster vaccination?

The Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO) recommends a booster vaccination with an mRNA vaccine (usually at six-month intervals after the second vaccination) for all persons aged 18 and over.

However, special groups of people should receive a booster vaccination as a matter of priority. These are persons with an immunodeficiency, persons aged 70 years and older, residents and persons cared for in facilities for the elderly, as well as staff in medical and nursing facilities with direct contact with vulnerable persons. People who have not yet received a coronavirus vaccination should also receive basic immunisation as a matter of priority.

Which vaccines are used for the booster vaccination?

Only mRNA vaccines (Biontech, Moderna) are used for booster vaccinations. Only these two vaccines are currently licensed for booster vaccinations in Germany. If the basic immunisation has been carried out with an mRNA vaccine, the same vaccine should be used for the booster vaccination. If this is not available, the other one can also be used. For people under 30 years of age, the use of BioNTech is generally recommended. This applies to the basic immunisation and the booster vaccination

Where can I get a booster vaccination?

Booster vaccinations are carried out by mobile vaccination teams, general practitioners, company doctors, vaccination centres and mobile vaccination services. Here is an overview of the vaccination centres in North Rhine-Westphalia: www.impfen.nrw

I was vaccinated with AstraZeneca or Johnson&Johnson. Can I still get a booster vaccination?

For those who have received their first vaccination protection with the Johnson&Johnson vector vaccine, STIKO recommends an additional mRNA vaccination from the fourth week after the administered Johnson&Johnson vaccination and a booster vaccination 6 months later to optimise the vaccination protection.

People who have received their first series of vaccinations with AstraZeneca's vector vaccine can also receive a booster vaccination with an mRNA vaccine six months after the second vaccination. The same applies to cross-vaccinated persons (1st vaccination: Vector vaccine + 2nd vaccination: mRNA vaccine).

Is the booster vaccination free of charge?

Yes. All coronavirus vaccinations are free of charge. This also applies to booster vaccinations.

I also received a flu vaccination. Is this compatible with a booster vaccination?

Yes. A flu vaccination can be given together with a vaccination against the coronavirus.

Vaccination for children between 5 and 11 years of age

Is the coronavirus vaccination also recommended for children and adolescents?

Weighing up all the data available so far, **the STIKO recommends COVID-19 vaccination for children aged five to eleven years with various pre-existing conditions.** In addition, vaccination is

recommended for children who are in contact with persons at high risk of a severe course of COVID-19 and who themselves cannot be protected by vaccination or can only be protected inadequately (e.g. the very elderly and immunocompromised). In addition, 5 to 11 year old children without previous illnesses can also be vaccinated against COVID-19 after appropriate medical information, if there is an individual wish of the children and parents or guardians. The individual dangers of possible side effects are the subject of the educational discussion by paediatricians and adolescent doctors in the run-up to vaccinations.

With which vaccines can children be vaccinated?

So far, only the mRNA vaccine Comirnaty® from BioNTech has been approved for the vaccination of children aged five to eleven. This vaccine differs in dosage, concentration and composition from the BioNTech vaccine for people aged 12 and over. In December, a total of 2.4 million doses for child vaccinations are to be delivered to the federal government. The first vaccine doses have already been delivered to paediatricians and adolescents.

I keep reading that the coronavirus courses in children are rather mild. Is it necessary to vaccinate your children at all?

Vaccinating children can help increase community protection. For example, it can be difficult for children to keep their distance during the school day or when meeting friends. Vaccinating young people prevents the virus from spreading among them. This protects not only themselves from a possible serious illness, but also those with whom they come into contact, who have higher risks of contracting the disease or who cannot be vaccinated. These are, for example, caregivers with pre-existing conditions or allergies that make a coronavirus vaccination impossible.