



Bundesinstitut für
Öffentliche Gesundheit

ROBERT KOCH INSTITUT



Covid-19 Vaccine

Effective protection against severe symptoms of
Covid-19 for people with underlying illnesses



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Wissen, was schützt.

What is the Covid-19 vaccine?

The coronavirus vaccine provides protection against severe infections of Covid-19 and decreases the risk of any long-term consequences (such as long Covid).

The Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO) recommends that all people aged 18 or older have **basic immunity**. Basic immunity can be achieved by coming into contact three times with components of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus (i.e. by means of vaccination or infection). At least one of these 3 occasions should be a vaccination. People with specific underlying illnesses and people who are in close contact with high-risk groups should also be given an **annual booster vaccination**.

You may be at **increased risk of severe symptoms of Covid-19** if you have the following underlying illnesses, among others:

- ▶ Chronic diseases of the respiratory organs
- ▶ Chronic cardiovascular diseases
- ▶ Chronic liver or kidney disease
- ▶ Metabolic diseases such as diabetes
- ▶ Being severely overweight (obesity)
- ▶ Diseases of the central nervous system (CNS)
- ▶ Down syndrome (Trisomy 21)
- ▶ Weakened immune system (e.g. due to an illness or medication)
- ▶ Cancer

In addition to basic immunity, it is also very important that this group of people receive an annual booster vaccination.

How can you become infected with coronavirus?



Coronavirus is mostly transmitted via droplets and aerosols when you cough, sneeze and talk. Aerosols are tiny droplets that float in the air.

If droplets that carry the coronaviruses come into contact with the mucous membranes of the nose, mouth or eyes, then you can become infected. **The greatest risk of infection is just before and just after the onset of symptoms.** It is also possible for infected persons to infect others without actually being unwell themselves.

What are the symptoms of Covid-19?

The coronavirus causes the disease Covid-19. Typical symptoms of a Covid-19 infection include **a cold, cough, sore throat, headache and aching joints.** Fever can also be present more often than with a cold. Shortness of breath and even breathlessness may also be experienced. Other possible symptoms are abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and loss of appetite. Older people and those **people with pre-existing conditions are at a higher risk of the disease causing serious illness,** for example, it could result in pneumonia, multiple organ failure or blockage of blood vessels (embolism). Some people who contract the illness also develop long Covid afterwards.

Why is it important to get vaccinated?

The risk of Covid-19 resulting in serious illness increases with certain underlying illnesses and with age. **The coronavirus vaccine provides people in these groups with the best possible level of protection against experiencing severe symptoms of the disease.** Fully vaccinated people are less likely to be hospitalised. Vaccination also reduces the risk of dying from the disease.

What Covid-19 vaccinations are recommended for people who have underlying illnesses?

If you have an underlying illness that is linked to a higher risk of experiencing severe symptoms of Covid-19, it is recommended that you acquire basic immunity and have an annual booster vaccination.

Very occasionally, **basic immunity** may not have been built up. If that is the case, any missing contact should be made up for by doses of the corona vaccine. Being infected with coronavirus can be a replacement for up to 2 of the recommended vaccinations. As a rule, there must be a gap of at least 3 months between the previous vaccination and the next one.

The **annual booster vaccination** should be given in autumn. Since the coronavirus is spread most often in autumn and winter, this is the best time to protect yourself. In terms of which vaccine to have, the recommendation is for any authorised mRNA or protein-based vaccine that has been adapted to the variants of the coronavirus that are currently in circulation.

If there is no immune deficiency and the person has already been infected with coronavirus in the current year, the respective booster vaccine would not usually be required.



The coronavirus vaccine can be given **at the same time as** other inactivated vaccines, such as the **flu or pneumococcal vaccine**.

Is the coronavirus vaccine safe?

Vaccines to protect against Covid-19 are well tolerated.

You may experience some of the usual reactions to having a vaccine, such as pain at the injection site, tiredness, headaches or fever. These symptoms usually go away after a few days. Severe side effects are very rare. The tolerability, efficacy and safety of the vaccination are investigated on an ongoing basis.

How else can you help to protect yourself?

Being vaccinated against coronavirus provides good protection against severe Covid-19 illness. However, it cannot offer complete protection. **Following simple hygiene measures can also help** you to protect yourself and others from infectious respiratory diseases.

Important hygiene tips



Keep your distance



Pay attention to hygiene when coughing and sneezing



Thoroughly ventilate spaces on a regular basis



Wash your hands regularly as part of your everyday routine



Cover your mouth and nose with a mask if necessary



Avoid contact with others



Stay at home if you are unwell



Keep your hands away from your face

You can read more information about the coronavirus and how you can protect yourself at www.infektionsschutz.de, www.rki.de/covid-19-faq-impfen and www.rki.de/covid-19-impfen.

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Further information about the Covid-19 vaccine:

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