

Ted gets a COVID-19 vaccination

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In Australia, the Government recommends that children aged 5 to 11 years old have two doses of the COVID-19 vaccination.

Generally, by this age children have had many injections through the National Immunisation Program. Most are before they are 18 months old and the most recent is when they are 4 so many children won't remember much about them. This can be good or bad depending on how their last experience was and how your child feels about medical treatments generally.

It is worth spending some time getting your child ready for their COVID-19 vaccination, even if they've been okay with previous injections. Needle phobias can develop after just one negative experience. When this happens it makes future treatments and medical visits much harder. The good news is, there are some simple things you can do to make things easier for you and your child. This will set them up for a smooth second vaccination and other future health treatments.

Our resources are easy to use and help you prepare your child for their vaccination. They include:

- **Ted gets a COVID-19 vaccination** video story
- **COVID Viral Splat!** interactive augmented reality (AR) game
- Activity Guides to help your child learn about vaccinations and COVID through play
- COVID-19 vaccination certificate so your child can show everyone they are ready for their own vaccination
- This Parent/Carer Advice Guide so that you feel well-prepared to support your child

It can help to sometimes sit with your child as they take Ted virtually through getting his vaccination. This way you can see where they may have concerns, and they have time to ask questions. 'I wonder' is a great way to begin a conversation. For example, 'I wonder how it will feel.' or 'I wonder what we should take with us to do after you have the injection.' Because you haven't expressed a particular feeling or idea, your child is more likely share how they really feel.

The Activity Guides show you how to create a squishy ball and role-play giving an injection. Both help to make the injection and COVID virus less daunting. The squishy ball is handy to take with you. It provides a sensory distraction and comforter before and during the vaccination. Don't forget to take your child's certificate too!



When to tell your child about their upcoming vaccination

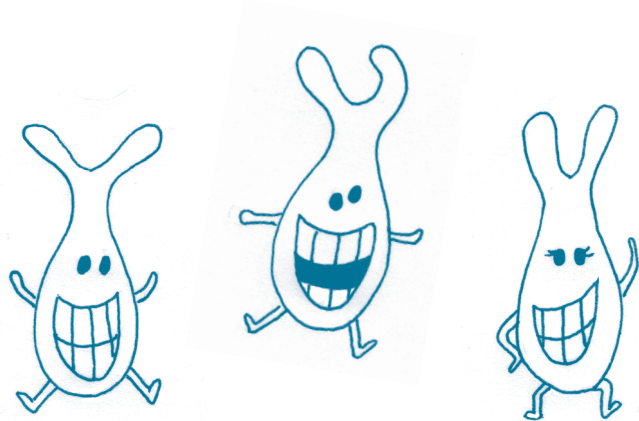
Your child's age, past experiences and unique personality will determine when it is best to tell them about their vaccination. For children under the age of 6, generally telling them only a few days prior will work best. This is enough time for them to take Ted through the process several times and ask questions but not too long to dwell on it. For older kids, telling them a week or two before lets them process the information and ask more detailed questions. You might also do online research together or talk with your healthcare professional.

How to know if you will need extra support

See how your child responds to taking Ted through his vaccination. This will help you decide if they might need extra time or specific support for their vaccination. If so contact your vaccination hub or doctor and see what can be arranged. Some ideas for ways to make it easier include:

- Not having a lot of people/noise around them
- Being in a private room
- Having plenty of time for each step so they don't feel rushed
- Visiting the location beforehand so they can see how it all works

Remember that your child may look to you and mirror your emotions. If you are uneasy with needles or feel anxious, try to manage your own concerns first. Try talking with your medical professional or practising some meditation or mindfulness. You could also ask a friend or family member to talk to your child and take them to the appointment.



During the test

It is normal for a child to feel anxious about their vaccination. Playing through this Teach Ted episode will help them understand what might happen. It also acts as a conversation starter and lets them to ask questions. Below are some common questions along with tips on how to support your child.

Generally, children feel more confident when they feel there is a plan in place and they have some control. Giving choices can really help with this. Even though they may not have a choice about getting the vaccination, they do have a choice about lots of other things. Keep options limited to two or three and only to those that are doable. For example, let them decide whether they'd like the injection in their left or right arm. (Tip: it's often best to choose the arm they don't use for writing and drawing as it can be a bit sore for a few days.) Asking whether they would like to watch as the injection is being done is another good one. Be flexible though. They may change their mind once they arrive so let them know this is ok too.

Praising your child can also help them feel good about their vaccination experience. Be specific, for example congratulating them on remembering their date of birth or holding their arm still during the injection. Remember, they'll need to get a second injection not too long after. Building lots of positive memories around this experience will help make the next one go smoothly. Also don't underestimate the power of praise on older kids. They may not show it as visibly but your approval and encouragement still play a big role in how they remember these moments.

Common questions and concerns

How long will the vaccination take?

Generally, the vaccination process (including checking your child's details) will take around 5 minutes. The injection itself only taking a few seconds. Once the injection is done you will be asked to wait for around 15 minutes, sometimes in another room. This is to make sure that your child doesn't have a reaction to the vaccine. During this time you should stay with your child. It can be a bit boring for them so we suggest you bring along some quiet activities for them to do. Remember you may be in a room with others. If you plan to watch something on a device it is best to bring headphones.

Younger children can find it hard to understand the abstract concept of time. Try relating it to something they know. For example, the injection will be over before they can blink 5 times. The 15 minute wait may be the same length as the time it takes to drive to school. Knowing it won't last forever can help children cope better.

How does the vaccine work and is it safe?

Even for adults, vaccinations can seem a little mystical. Each vaccine works a little differently but have the same result. They vary depending on what they are protecting you against and the way they deliver the protection. They all work by teaching your body about the virus and how to fight it. Think of them like a coach who teaches players how to play a game in a training session. That way when the player goes into the game, they'll already know what to expect and what they need to do. Vaccines work the same way for our immune system. They teach your body what the virus will look like. This helps your body to quickly spot the virus and your immune system to know how to fight it.

Even if you are vaccinated, you might still catch COVID. However, studies show that generally you won't get as sick. You are also less likely to pass the virus to others. It can help to explain to your child that when they get vaccinated they are actually helping the people they love like their family and friends. You might like to talk about a specific person and how your child is helping them to stay safe. Just like a superhero does challenging things to help others, they can too!

Before any vaccine is approved for use in Australia, it has to go through lots of testing. The Therapeutic Goods Administration is the Government agency responsible for this. There is also a group of experts called the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI). They look at the risks and benefits of a vaccine before recommending it be offered to a particular group of people.

You can find out more about the importance of getting vaccinated, the safety of the vaccines and potential side effects in this [Australian Academy of Science article](#).

Will it hurt?

If asked whether the injection will hurt, a good response is, 'I'm not sure because it feels different for everybody. Some people say it feels like a scratch and others don't feel it at all. You might also have a bit of a sore arm afterwards. That's really normal. You can tell me afterwards what it felt like for you.'

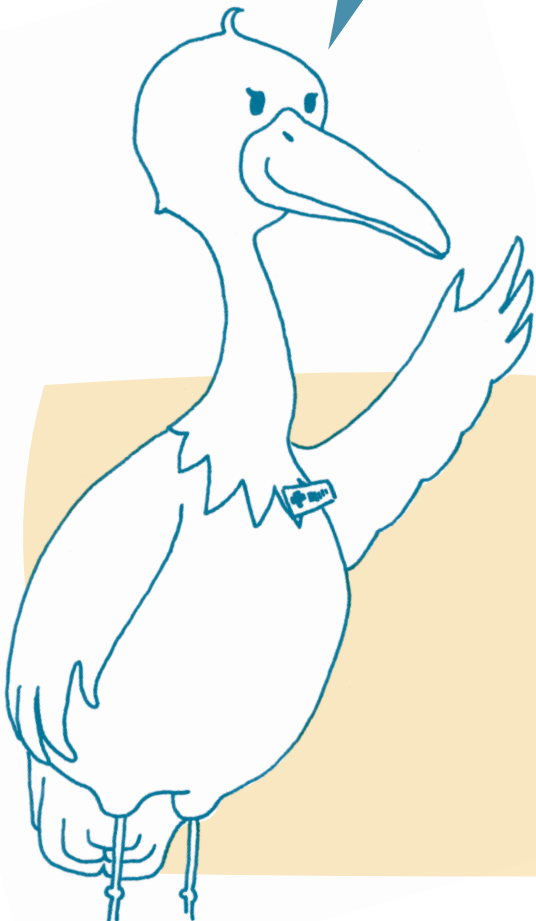
Taking this approach helps to set their expectations while also validating their concern. It may also help to remind them that you or another adult they know will be with them the whole time.

You can read more about how to manage pain in children in this [Sydney Children's Hospital Network fact sheet](#).



What's the difference?

Injection	Using a fine needle to put the COVID-19 vaccine into your body
Immunisation	Becoming protected against COVID-19 by getting a vaccination and your body's immune system learning how to fight the virus
Vaccination	Getting the COVID-19 vaccine as an injection into your upper arm
Vaccine	The medicine which helps your immune system fight COVID



Distract and engage

Distraction is a great non-medicinal way you can reduce your child's discomfort or anxiety. You might read a story, sing a song, play a game, watch a movie, focus on breathing or practice mindfulness.

What to bring with you

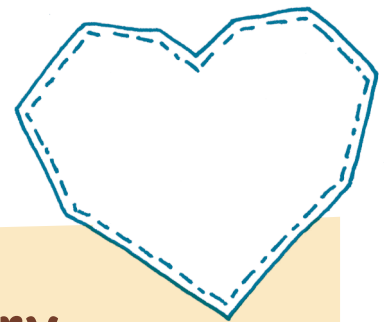
You may have time in the waiting room before your appointment so take something to keep your child occupied. Devices are usually allowed. Headphones can help your child stay calm by zoning out what's happening around them.

Have a plan for how you might distract your child during and after the injection and bring what you need.

Where to find more information

You can find all our COVID-19 resources along with other great learning-through-play ideas on our website, www.teachted.com.au. The Australian Government's Department of Health website also publishes information about [COVID-19 vaccinations](#). This includes information in other languages and a link to locations where you can get your child vaccinated.

If you have more questions you can also talk to your GP about your child's specific needs.



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