

THL recommends coronavirus vaccinations for at-risk children aged 5 to 11 years, for the entire age group require more information on safety

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Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) recommends starting coronavirus vaccinations for children aged 5 to 11 years who belong to risk groups as soon as vaccines are available.

Vaccinations are also recommended for children who are in contact with severely immunodeficient persons. Vaccinations of children who do not belong to risk groups cannot, however, begin before the government decree on voluntary Covid-19 vaccinations has been amended.

THL does not yet propose vaccinations for other children aged 5 to 11 years. All children in this age group will be offered the possibility of getting a coronavirus vaccine when more information on the safety of vaccinations and especially on rare adverse effects has been accumulated.

THL examines the increasing research data during December and prepares to begin vaccinations after new year in case sufficient evidence on safety has been accumulated.

” The main reason why THL does not recommend vaccinations at this point for all children aged 5 to 11 years is that their burden of disease is small. Infections in children of this age are usually mild and severe disease is extremely rare compared to other vaccine-preventable diseases. When the burden of disease is small in one’s own group, very few adverse effects are accepted. If society aims to control the epidemic by vaccinating children who themselves benefit only a little from the vaccinations, having reliable information on safety is even more important”, says Chief Physician at THL, Hanna Nohynek.

THL will draft separate instructions regarding both children belonging to risk groups and severely immunodeficient persons. Vaccinations of children at risk can be started as soon as Finland gets vaccines intended for children. Current estimate is that vaccines may arrive by mid-December. The vaccine dose for children aged 5 to 11 year is have of that given to over 12-year-olds. In Finland the interval between the first and second dose is 6 to 12 weeks and children are vaccinated at the same interval as adults.

The most common adverse effects are the same in small children as in 12-year-olds

According to information from other countries the most common adverse effects in children have been similar with those observed in over 12-year-old vaccinated persons. Majority of adverse effects are mild and transient, such as redness and swelling of the injection site, fever and headache as well as tiredness, muscle pain and chills.

” Even though coronavirus vaccines have been observed to cause mainly very mild adverse effects in children aged 5 to 11 years, the number of studied cases is still small regarding detection of possible rare adverse effects. Data on the safety of vaccinations for children increases all the time. Before we have sufficient data, we do not recommend giving coronavirus vaccines to all children aged 5 to 11 year”, says Nohynek.

THL monitors closely accumulating data on the efficacy and safety of vaccines in the age group of 5 to 11 years.

Coronavirus vaccinations and planned and carried out by municipalities. Each municipality determines how to organize vaccinations of children belonging to risk groups.

THL’s recommendation is based on the report of a subcommittee of the National Advisory Committee on Vaccines (KRAR) and the statement drafted by KRAR in its meeting on Dec. 1st. 2021.

THL will make a proposal on vaccinations for children to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and the final decision will be made by the government.

Further information

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