

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?

Basically: As a rule, the booster vaccination should be given at an **interval of six months** from the last vaccine dose of the basic immunisation. Shortening the vaccination interval to five months may be considered in individual cases.

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.

Can children be vaccinated?

The "Standing Commission on Vaccination" (STIKO) explicitly recommends vaccination against the coronavirus also for all 12 to 17 year olds. No vaccine is currently licensed for younger children under 12 years of age. BioNTech's application for approval for children aged 5 to 11 years is currently under review.

Since the vaccination recommendation was given for 12 to 17 year olds, there has been a great demand for vaccinations. Now more than 52 per cent of this age group have full vaccination protection.

For the vaccination of children and adolescents aged 12 to 15 years, the consent of the legal guardian(s) is required. It is usually carried out by the paediatrician or the family doctor. It is also possible to use the various stationary or mobile vaccination services in the municipalities.

Both mRNA vaccines approved for booster vaccination are highly effective. In principle, the same vaccine should be used as for the basic immunisation, in accordance with the STIKO recommendation. If this is not available, the other one can also be used. Studies on this cross-immunisation are not yet available, but it can be assumed that the vaccination protection is

significantly increased by the booster vaccination in these cases as well. According to the STIKO's recommendation, persons under 30 years of age should always be vaccinated with the BioNTech vaccine.