

COVID-19 Vaccination Policies for Children: Global Recommendations and Mandates in 2025

As of April 23, 2025, COVID-19 vaccination policies for children vary significantly across countries, with a general trend toward more targeted approaches rather than universal recommendations or mandates. This report examines current national policies, highlighting which countries still recommend or mandate COVID-19 vaccinations for children.

Current U.S. Vaccination Policy and Potential Changes

The United States currently maintains a recommendation that all children ages 6 months and older receive the 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine, according to CDC guidance published in early 2025^[1]. However, this policy appears to be in transition. The CDC is actively considering narrowing its recommendations to focus specifically on higher-risk populations rather than all children^[2].

"The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is contemplating a shift in its Covid-19 vaccination guidelines, potentially recommending annual shots specifically for older individuals and those with compromised immune systems, as opposed to the current broad recommendation for everyone aged six months and older," reports a recent CNN article from April 16, 2025^[2].

This potential policy shift is occurring against a backdrop of federal actions discouraging vaccine mandates in educational settings. In February 2025, President Donald Trump signed an Executive Order prohibiting federal funding for schools that mandate COVID-19 vaccines^[3] ^[4]. The order states that "given the incredibly low risk of serious COVID-19 illness for children and young adults, threatening to shut them out of an education is an intolerable infringement on personal freedom" ^[4].

Additionally, HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is considering removing the COVID-19 vaccine from the CDC's childhood vaccine schedule entirely, which would represent a significant policy reversal^[5].

European Approaches to Childhood COVID-19 Vaccination

European countries have generally adopted more targeted approaches to childhood COVID-19 vaccination:

United Kingdom

As of March 2025, the UK's spring COVID-19 vaccination program limits eligibility to specific groups:

- Adults aged 75 years and over
- Residents in care homes for older adults
- Individuals aged 6 months and over who are immunosuppressed^[6]

Notably, healthy children are not included in the UK's current COVID-19 vaccination recommendations, representing a significant departure from earlier pandemic policies^[6].

Other European Countries

While comprehensive data for all European countries is not available in the search results, there appears to be a general trend away from universal childhood COVID-19 vaccination recommendations. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) vaccination scheduler shows varying approaches across EU member states, with many adopting age-specific or risk-based recommendations rather than universal policies^[7].

Asian COVID-19 Vaccination Policies

South Korea

South Korea maintains one of the more comprehensive COVID-19 vaccination policies. As of late 2024, the Korean vaccination recommendations include:

1. All adults at elevated risk of COVID-19 infection or severe illness should receive a dose of the 2024-2025 vaccine
2. All children and adults aged 6 months or older are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine^[8]

The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently extended the vaccination period for high-risk groups until June 30, 2025, particularly encouraging immunocompromised individuals to receive additional vaccinations^[9].

Global Trend Toward Risk-Based Approaches

A significant global trend is the shift from universal recommendations toward more targeted, risk-based approaches. Countries including Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom have moved away from recommending annual COVID-19 vaccinations for healthy younger adults and children^[2].

The World Health Organization also "doesn't routinely recommend annual Covid-19 vaccines for healthy adults under 65 or healthy children" ^[2], providing a framework that many countries are following.

School-Based Mandates and State Policies

While some countries and regions previously mandated COVID-19 vaccination for school attendance, such policies have been largely discontinued or prohibited as of 2025:

- In the United States, 22 states have enacted bans on student COVID-19 vaccine mandates according to the National Academy for State Health Policy^[5]
- Many states are "winding down COVID-19 vaccine mandates" and "moving to limit the ability of state and educational institutions to require COVID-19 vaccinations in schools" ^[10]
- Public support for school vaccine mandates in general remains strong in the US (nearly three-quarters of adults support requiring children to be vaccinated against preventable diseases), but support for prohibiting unvaccinated children from attending schools has dropped significantly since before the pandemic^[11]

Conclusion

As of April 2025, there appears to be no major country that currently mandates COVID-19 vaccination for all children. Recommendations vary, with the United States maintaining the broadest recommendation for children (though this may soon change), while most other high-income countries have shifted to risk-based approaches that focus on vulnerable populations.

The general global trend indicates a move away from universal childhood COVID-19 vaccination policies toward more targeted approaches focusing on age groups and populations at higher risk of severe disease. This shift reflects evolving understanding of COVID-19 risks in children, changing virus variants, and broader social and political considerations around vaccine policies.

While COVID-19 vaccines remain widely available for children in most developed countries, the era of broad mandates or universal recommendations appears to be waning, with health authorities increasingly emphasizing individualized risk assessment and parental decision-making.



1. <https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>
2. <https://www.cnn.com/2025/04/16/health/cdc-risk-based-covid-19-vaccine-recommendation/index.html>
3. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/02/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-prohibits-federal-funding-for-covid-19-vaccine-mandates-in-schools/>
4. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/keeping-education-accessible-and-ending-covid-19-vaccine-mandates-in-schools/>
5. <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/04/22/trump-pull-covid-vaccine-recommendation-children-00304091>
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vaccine-update-issue-356-march-2025/vaccine-update-issue-356-march-2025>
7. <https://vaccine-schedule.ecdc.europa.eu/Scheduler/ByDisease?SelectedDiseaseId=52&SelectedCountryIdByDisease=-1>
8. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11704866/>

9. <https://en.sportschosun.com/culture/2025/04/2024-2025-season-vaccination-extended-to-june-30-for-65217>
10. <https://nashp.org/state-tracker/states-address-school-vaccine-mandates-and-mask-mandates/>
11. <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2025-01-americans-school-vaccine-mandates-strong.html>