COVID-19 Vaccines for Children
Frequently Asked Questions

Why should children get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Medical and public health experts, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), recommend that children and adolescents 12 years of age and older get a COVID-19 vaccine to help protect them from contracting and spreading the virus. More than 4 million children in the United States have tested positive for COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic, and COVID-19 has caused serious illness, complications, and even death in some children and teens.

A recent CDC report found that COVID-19–associated hospitalization rates among adolescents increased during March–April 2021, and nearly one third recently hospitalized adolescents required ICU admission. Rates of COVID-19–associated hospitalization among adolescents also exceeded historical rates of seasonal influenza-associated hospitalization during comparable periods.

The majority of children aren't getting severely ill from COVID-19, so why is it important to get them vaccinated?

While most children with COVID-19 have mild or no symptoms, COVID-19 has caused serious illness, complications, and even death in some children and teens. Children with underlying health conditions may be more likely to become severely ill.

Another important reason for children to get the COVID-19 vaccine is to protect their friends, parents, grandparents, teachers and the broader community. And being vaccinated will allow kids to get back to the things they have missed, including in-person school, going to summer camp, playing with friends, and participating in sports and other organized activities. Vaccinated individuals have a very low risk of contracting COVID-19 or spreading it to others, which adds a layer of protection for those who are not vaccinated — such as younger siblings, or immunocompromised individuals who are not currently eligible.

Finally, COVID-19 vaccines also reduce the risk of MIS-C, a serious condition of multisystem inflammation that has affected over 4,000 children in the United States during the pandemic, including 36 children whose deaths were associated with MIS-C.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for children?

Yes. The FDA and CDC have carefully reviewed the clinical trials for Pfizer/BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine. Based on data from clinical trials involving several thousand adolescents, they have concluded that the vaccine is safe and effective for children 12 and older. Clinical trials are also underway regarding the potential use of COVID-19 vaccines for children under age 12. In addition, the vaccines are being closely monitored to ensure the safety of the vaccines for all eligible age groups.

Parents and guardians can now enroll adolescents ages 12 and older in v-safe, a free, smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to provide personalized health check-ins after your child receives a COVID-19 vaccination. Through v-safe, you can report any side effects your child may have after vaccination. V-safe also reminds you to get your child's second dose. Learn more about v-safe here.

When can my child get vaccinated for COVID-19?

Everyone in the United States ages 12 years and older is now eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Currently, no COVID-19 vaccine is authorized for children younger than age 12. Clinical trials to test the efficacy and safety of the vaccines in younger children are underway,

Which vaccine should my child take?

As of July 2021, only the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine has been granted emergency use authorization by the FDA for children ages 12 and older. This is a two-dose series, spaced three weeks (21 days) apart. Children are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after their second dose.

Does my child still need to wear a mask, even after they are vaccinated?

Until children are fully vaccinated, they should continue to wear a mask in public indoor settings or when interacting in crowded settings, even outdoors, and when around people who don't live in their household. Until a vaccine is available for younger children, children aged 2 and older should wear masks in public indoor settings or when interacting in crowded settings, even outdoors, and when around people who don't live in their household.

What side effects do children experience from the vaccine?

Children may experience mild side effects, such as soreness in the arm, fatigue, headache, or a slight fever, and most will pass in one to two days. These are signs that their body is building immunity, but even if they don't experience any side effects, their immune system is still building protection against the virus. Serious side effects are rare.

What about long term effects?

According to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, the history of vaccines shows that delayed effects following vaccination can occur. But when they do, these effects tend to happen within two months of vaccination. Because of the knowledge gained with other vaccines, the FDA required companies making COVID-19 vaccines to follow trial participants for a minimum of eight weeks before they could submit their data for approval. Likewise, the participants in the vaccine trials continue to be followed even though the vaccines have been approved for use. The CDC and FDA have not identified any long-term effects from COVID-19 vaccines.

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Which children cannot be vaccinated?

It is always best to check with your pediatrician or trusted healthcare provider about vaccinations. If your child has a significant health issue or a compromised immune system, they may recommend not getting a vaccine.

Will children need a COVID-19 vaccine to return to school in the fall?

Vaccination requirements for public schools vary according to local requirements, and that will likely be true for COVID-19 vaccines as well. All 50 states require certain immunizations — including tetanus, measles, polio, and chicken pox vaccinations — and some states have additional requirements. While many states and school districts have not yet announced their COVID-19 vaccination policies for the fall, requirements and/ or recommendations will be issued at the state, local, and district levels as officials review guidance and as more children become vaccinated. Regardless of any requirement, all children who are eligible for COVID-19 vaccines are encouraged to get vaccinated as soon as possible in order to protect themselves and others from catching and spreading the virus.

Can the COVID-19 vaccine be given at the same time as other immunizations?

Yes. Both CDC and the AAP have stated that co-administration of COVID-19 vaccine with other routine immunizations is acceptable. A growing number of primary care providers and pediatricians are now offering COVID-19 vaccines, so it may be possible for your child to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as other routine immunizations. If your child's doctor doesn't offer COVID-19 vaccines, parents may need to schedule separate appointments for COVID-19 vaccines and other routine immunizations.

What about myocarditis?

As of July 2021, more than 177 million people have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine in the United States, and CDC continues to monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines for any health problems that happen after vaccination. There have been very rare instances of myocarditis and pericarditis in vaccinated teens and young adults after vaccination. Myocarditis is inflammation of the heart muscle, and pericarditis is inflammation of the outer lining of the heart. In both cases, the body's immune system causes inflammation in response to an infection or some other trigger. CDC and its partners are actively monitoring these reports, by reviewing data and medical records, to better understand any relationship to COVID-19 vaccination.

Most patients who received care responded well to treatment and rest and quickly felt better. Confirmed cases have occurred:
· Mostly in male adolescents and young adults age 16 years or older
· More often after getting the second dose than after the first dose of one of these two mRNA COVID-19 vaccines
· Typically within several days after COVID-19 vaccination

Patients can usually return to their normal daily activities after their symptoms improve. They should speak with their doctor about return to exercise or sports. CDC and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, together with 15 of the country's leading medical and public health organizations — including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Medical Association and the American Nurses Association — issued a joint statement saying they "strongly encourage everyone 12 and older" to get vaccinated for COVID-19 because the benefits far outweigh any potential harms, especially with new virus variants circulating across the United States.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine effective against the new virus variants?

At this point in time, scientists are still studying different forms of the virus that causes COVID-19. Current data suggests that COVID-19 vaccines authorized and recommended for use in the United States offer protection against most variants. For this reason, COVID-19 vaccines are an essential tool to protect people against COVID-19, including illness caused by the new variants.

Can my child receive the COVID-19 vaccine while menstruating?

According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and CDC, there's no reason to put off getting vaccinated if someone is having their menstrual period. CDC and FDA have been closely monitoring safety data and have not seen any patterns of concern.

Will COVID-19 vaccines impact my child's hormones or fertility?

There is [no evidence](#) that the COVID-19 vaccines cause fertility side effects. COVID-19 vaccines don't affect puberty or a child's reproductive development. The [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#) and [CDC](#) recommend vaccination for all eligible people, including children ages 12 and older, who may consider future pregnancy.

Do parents need to give consent before a vaccine is given to an eligible minor?

Federal law does not have a specific requirement for medical consent for vaccination of a minor. However, states and local jurisdictions have medical consent laws that address the circumstances under which a medical provider must seek consent. These laws vary across jurisdictions and your child's pediatrician or vaccine administrator may be subject to policy requirements for consent within their own medical practice. This [resource](#) provides information to help you better understand the landscape of parental consent laws, including which states have such laws, for what ages, and where exceptions for COVID-19 vaccination have been made.

Does my child need to get the COVID-19 vaccine if they have already had the virus?

Yes. Scientists do not yet know how long naturally acquired antibodies in people who have had COVID-19 will be protected from reinfection or new virus variants.

Therefore, all children eligible for vaccination should get their shots. Also, science has found that the level of immunity following vaccination is much higher, in general, than immunity following infection.

Where can my child get their COVID-19 vaccine?

- Call your child's pediatrician. Some pediatricians' offices have been authorized to provide COVID-19, which is the most convenient option for catching up on other routine immunizations at the same time.
- If your pediatrician or healthcare provider does not offer COVID-19 vaccines, you can:
  - Visit vaccines.gov
  - Text your ZIP CODE to 438829
  - Call 1-800-232-0233

How much does the COVID-19 vaccine for children cost?

Nothing. The federal government is providing vaccines free of charge to all people living in the United States, regardless of insurance coverage or immigration status.

What vaccines do my children need to be up-to-date on their routine immunizations?

Preteens and teens need four vaccines to protect against serious diseases:
- The meningococcal conjugate vaccine to protect against meningitis and bloodstream infections;
- HPV vaccine to protect against cancers caused by HPV;
- TDap/DTap vaccine to protect against tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough;
- And the yearly flu vaccine to protect against the seasonal flu.

To make sure your preteen or teen is up-to-date with their vaccines, check with your pediatrician and confirm with CDC's [Vaccine Schedule for children ages 7 - 18](#).

Children from birth through age 6 need multiple series of vaccinations to be protected from diseases such as the measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis A and B, varicella and the seasonal flu.Check with your child's pediatrician to confirm they are up-to-date with their immunizations in accordance with CDC's [Vaccine Schedule for Infants and Children](#).

Public health guidance on COVID-19 is constantly evolving. Health Action Alliance is committed to regularly updating our materials once we've engaged public health, business and communications experts about the implications of new guidance from the public health community and effective business strategies that align with public health goals. Together, we can turn the tide against COVID-19 and build a stronger, healthier future.