

STRATEGIC BRIEF: PARENTS OF TEENS

BACKGROUND

It's Up to You is a simple idea that can inspire brilliant executions. Organizations that are promoting COVID vaccine confidence can unite together under this creative framing, to strengthen key communications points and motivate those in the 'moveable middle' to get informed.



In May, the FDA authorized use of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID vaccine for children ages 12-15 (minors ages 16-17 were already eligible). Roughly 50% of American parents are intending to get their teens vaccinated, or have done so already. A minority of parents are highly resistant to the idea. In the middle are parents who are on the fence—they have concerns, and they require more information and assurance that COVID vaccination is safe, effective, and worthwhile for their teens.

FAST FACTS:

- US population: Ages 12-17: 25.2 million | Parents of children ages 12-17 in household: 35 million
- Teen and parents demographics generally approximate US gen pop demographics (excepting age clusters).
- The health threat posed by COVID-19 to young people is lower compared to older age cohorts. But the risk is not zero, particularly if a child has an underlying condition.
- Approximately 50,000 children have lost a parent from COVID-19.
- **Young people who have contracted COVID can transmit COVID to others in their communities,** including older adults and those with underlying conditions, even if the young person is asymptomatic.
- **Approximately 65-70% of all parents of teens say they are intending/leaning toward getting their teen vaccinated against COVID, if they have not already. About 10% are strongly opposed. The remainder—approximately 20%—are currently undecided.** (Note: We do not have similar quantitative on teens' attitudes about COVID vaccination.)
- The biggest predictor of whether a parent wants their teen vaccinated is whether the parent has gotten vaccinated. But there is a 10% drop-off between the percent of parents who have gotten vaccinated themselves and the percent who are intending to get their teen vaccinated.

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KEY OBJECTIVE

Leverage targeted messaging, content and trusted influencers to motivate parents to learn the facts about vaccinating their teens—the vaccine safety and effectiveness, and the major upsides compared to perceived risks.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Parents of children ages 12-17 and who are hesitant about getting their teen vaccinated.

- **Not** parents who are highly resistant to getting their teen vaccinated.
- **Not** teens themselves, at least at this juncture; teen-targeted comms would entail a separate brief plus special considerations.

KEY AUDIENCE INSIGHTS

- **Families' COVID routine.** Over the course of the pandemic, families have found a way to live with COVID. Some families have taken strong measures and have been hypervigilant; others moderately or less vigilant. Regardless, families have established their own routines and considerations, especially in light of the adjustments they've had to make in terms of school closings and remote learning.
- **Teens are surviving, not thriving.** Parents clearly see the emotional toll that the pandemic has taken on their teens. Their kids have been stuck at home and in their rooms, largely unable to socialize with their friends, socialize in and out of school, engage in sports and other meaningful activities, and just generally be a kid.
- **For teens, life remains somewhat on hold.** While the country continues to 'open up', teens are behind the curve in terms of feeling 'back to normal,' mostly because they finished the school year under states' pandemic protocols and the new school year has not yet started.
- **The risk from COVID can seem smaller than the risk of the vaccine.** Parents know that their teens are less likely to suffer a serious case of COVID compared to older people. And just like many other Americans who are hesitant about COVID vaccination, they have concerns about potential side effects, particularly in the long-term, due to the vaccines' novelty and the speed of vaccine development and authorization.
- **'Wait and see' seems prudent, especially when it comes to children.** In addition to the commonly cited concerns about the COVID vaccines, many parents cite their fears about the risk of injecting a vaccine that they do not know much about into the developing bodies of adolescents. (These concerns are specific to COVID vaccines, not vaccines in general.)
- **This can be a teaching moment.** Many parents see the decision to get their teens vaccinated as a family decision, not theirs alone. They want to discuss and engage with their teens about how they feel about COVID vaccination, rather than dictate a decision.
- **Peace of mind.** At the same time, undecided parents are not shrugging off the potential benefits of vaccinating teens. They are conflicted. What they most want is information about vaccination that will provide them peace of mind that: a) COVID vaccination is safe; b) it would enable their teens to get fully back to being a teen without the attendant worries about COVID (infection or transmission).
- **Trust in doctors.** In our research, many parents said that they intend to speak to their family GP or pediatrician. While many parents do not have access or a trusted personal relationship with a physician, those who do generally trust their doctor's advice on this issue.

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CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

- Focus on movable middle parents by shifting their mindset from vaccine hesitancy to vaccine confidence.
- We have developed two distinct but connected communications strategies:

THRIVING STARTS HERE

GET:	TO:	BY:
Parents who have mitigated COVID risks for their families by focusing on survival mode	Recognize that this is their opportunity to confidently get their kids back out into the world where they can thrive safely and be happy	Providing parents access to the right information from trusted resources.

STRAIGHT FROM THE SOURCE

GET:	TO:	BY:
Cautious parents who are hesitant to get their teens vaccinated	Recognize that this is their opportunity to confidently get their kids back out into the world where they can thrive safely and be happy	Providing parents access to the right information from trusted resources.

MAIN MESSAGE

- The decision to get vaccinated is up to you—and we're here to provide you the information you need to make an informed decision. It's up to you.

CALL-TO-ACTION

- Go to [GetVaccineAnswers.org](https://www.getvaccineanswers.org) to get answers to your vaccine questions to help you make an informed decision.
- And talk to your family doctor.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Be empathetic; acknowledge that their questions and doubts are valid.
- Avoid any whiff of condescension, elitism, or chiding.
- Parents need to feel that messages are directly relevant to their specific concerns and questions around vaccinating teens, not vaccination generally.
- Timing: Recognize that many families are already getting back to missed moments. Position vaccination as a way to continue doing so that will assure their peace of mind about doing so.