

COVID-19 FAQs PARENT AUDIENCES

1. I'M A PARENT OR CAREGIVER. WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT VACCINES FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS?

In the United States, everyone age 12 and up is currently eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccination. The CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend that everyone in this group get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as they can.

At this time, children and teens age 12 and up are eligible to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, but those younger than 12 years of age are not.

Before the COVID-19 vaccines were authorized by the FDA, clinical trials showed vaccines to be remarkably safe and effective for adults and teens age 16 and up. Trials involved tens of thousands of volunteers. After getting additional safety data for younger teens, the FDA extended authorization to adolescents age 12 and older. Clinical trials are underway for children as young as six months.

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine will help keep children and teens from getting seriously ill even if they do get COVID-19.

2. HOW DO VACCINES WORK FOR KIDS?

The COVID-19 vaccine works similarly to other vaccines your child or teen may have had. Germs such as SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, invade and multiply inside the body. The vaccine stops this by teaching the immune system to recognize and make antibodies to fight the virus. After vaccination, your child or teen has less of a chance of getting COVID-19. If they do get infected with the virus, they may not be as sick as they would without the vaccine.

3. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF VACCINATION FOR CHILDREN?

Getting your child or teen vaccinated will protect them from getting COVID-19. Although fewer children and teens have been infected with COVID-19 than adults, they can still be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, get sick from COVID-19, and spread COVID-19 to others. The vaccines protect the people around you, like those at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 or those who can't get vaccinated — including infants, or people with weakened immune systems from things like chemotherapy for cancer.

After vaccination, your child or teen has a lower chance of getting COVID-19. If they do get infected with the virus, they may not be as sick as they would without the vaccine.

Another benefit is that once your child or teen is fully vaccinated for COVID-19, they can safely resume many activities that they did prior to the pandemic, without having to wear a mask.

4. IS THE VACCINE SAFE FOR MY CHILD?

Studies show that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective for children and teens age 12 and up. COVID-19 vaccines are being administered under the most intensive monitoring in U.S. history. Safety studies have included adolescents, and show the vaccines are safe for this age group.

Like adults, children and teens may have some side effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccination. These side effects may affect your child or teen's ability to do daily activities, but they should go away within a few days.

The CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend that children and teens age 12 and older get vaccinated against COVID-19. If you have questions or concerns about vaccinating your child or teen, it's important to talk to your family doctor, pediatrician, pharmacist, or whichever trusted healthcare professional you get your medical information from.

5. WILL THIS IMPACT MY CHILD'S REPRODUCTIVE DEVELOPMENT?

No, the COVID-19 vaccines don't affect puberty or a child or teen's reproductive development in any way. Given that the vaccine's mRNA molecule mimics a natural human process, medical experts are confident that the vaccines are safe for growing bodies.

6. ARE THERE ANY LONG-TERM SIDE EFFECTS ON CHILDREN?

Serious side effects that would cause a long-term health problem are extremely unlikely following COVID-19 vaccination.

Long-term side effects following any vaccination are extremely rare. Vaccine monitoring has historically shown that if side effects are going to happen, they generally happen within six weeks of receiving a vaccine dose.

For this reason, the Food and Drug Administration required each of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines to be studied for at least eight weeks after the final dose. Millions of people have received COVID-19 vaccines, and no long-term side effects have been detected.

7. DOES MY CHILD STILL NEED TO WEAR A MASK ONCE THEY'RE FULLY VACCINATED?

If your child or teen is fully vaccinated, they can safely resume most activities without having to wear a mask or stay six feet apart from others. Since regulations on mask-wearing differ from place to place, you should check to see what your local governments, businesses, and workplaces currently require.

8. CAN COVID-19 VACCINES LEAD TO HEART INFLAMMATION?

There have been a small number of reported cases of myocarditis — a condition that involves the inflammation of the heart muscle — after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. These reports are rare, given the hundreds of millions of vaccine doses administered, and have been reported after mRNA COVID-19 vaccination (mostly among male adolescents and young adults). Symptoms of these rare cases included chest pain, shortness of breath, or feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering, or pounding heart. Most patients with myocarditis who received care responded well to treatment and rest and quickly felt better.

CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics continue to recommend that everyone 12 years of age and older be vaccinated against COVID-19, given the risk of COVID-19 illness and related, possibly severe complications, such as long-term health problems, hospitalization, and even death. If you have concerns about COVID-19 vaccination, talk with your healthcare provider or your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic.