Frequently Asked Questions

COVID-19 Vaccine Safety and Effectiveness for Children and Adolescents

Q: Do you think I should get my child vaccinated against COVID-19?

A: I strongly recommend your child get vaccinated against COVID-19.
- The vaccine will help lower the chances of getting COVID-19.
- If your child still gets infected after they get vaccinated, the vaccine will reduce their chance of serious illness.
- Getting vaccinated may also help protect people around them

Q: Is COVID-19 a risk to my child?

A: Although fewer children have been infected with COVID-19 compared to adults, children can:
- Get sick or die from COVID-19
- Spread COVID-19 to others
- Get serious complications from COVID-19, such as "long COVID" or a dangerous inflammatory disease called MIS-C

Q: Is COVID-19 vaccination safe for my child?

A: Yes, the FDA approved and authorized COVID-19 vaccines based on extensive clinical trials showing the vaccine is safe and effective for children. No serious side effects were detected in clinical trials of the vaccine in children. The studies are ongoing, and the U.S. has very strong vaccine safety systems to catch any warning signs early.

Q: What are common side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine in children?

A: Like other vaccines, the most common side effects are a sore arm, tiredness, headache, and muscle pain. Reported side effects in children were generally mild to moderate in severity and occurred within two days after vaccination, and most went away within one to two days. These symptoms are a sign that the vaccine is prompting an immune response as needed. The health risks if children are infected with COVID-19 are much higher than the risk of vaccine side effects.

Q: Do COVID-19 mRNA vaccines change your DNA? What's in the vaccine?

A: The vaccines contain the active ingredient, messenger RNA (mRNA), along with fat, salts, and sugars to protect the mRNA and help it work better in the body. COVID-19 mRNA vaccines do not contain any egg proteins, gluten, pork products, metals, tracking devices, fetal material, and do not change or alter your DNA in any way. MRNA vaccines teach our body's cells how to make a protein that triggers an immune response. That immune response and making antibodies is what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies.

Q: What is VAERS? I am hearing reports that children have died from the COVID-19 vaccine.

A: There have not been any verified reports of children dying from COVID-19 vaccination. VAERS is an early warning system used to monitor adverse events that happen after vaccination and one of the serval systems CDC and U.S. FDA use to monitor vaccines. Having a report to VAERS doesn't mean that the vaccine caused the problem. It warns the experts of potential problems they may need to assess, and it alerts them to further action, if needed. CDC provides timely updates on selected adverse events reported after COVID-19 vaccination.

Q: How did they make and test the COVID-19 vaccines so quickly?

A: Scientists have been working on this mRNA technology for two decades, so it's been a long time in the making. Typically, vaccine development requires much time for fundraising to complete all the steps, but this time funding was not a barrier as the whole world was invested in finding a safe option for prevention of coronavirus disease. The vaccines went through the same rigorous three phase clinical trials process as all other vaccines.

Q: Can my child get the COVID-19 vaccine if they have an underlying health condition?

A: Most people with underlying health or medical conditions can get COVID-19 vaccines. In fact, many underlying conditions put your child at high risk of complications from COVID-19 disease, so the vaccine is even more important to keep your child from getting sick. Let your child's health care provider know about all their allergies and health conditions before getting vaccinated.

Q: What is Myocarditis and is there a connection to COVID-19 vaccination?

A: Myocarditis (and pericarditis) are terms to describe inflammation in or around the heart. There have been no deaths from myocarditis determine to be caused by COVID-19 vaccination in the United States. An individual is more likely to develop myocarditis after infection with COVID-19 than from the vaccine and the strong benefits of the vaccines far outweigh the low risk of myocarditis.

Q: Why should my child get vaccinated against COVID-19 if they can still get infected?

A: Although there is still a chance of a breakthrough COVID-19 infection after vaccination, the vaccines were designed to prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19 and are still successful at doing so. If your child does get sick after they're fully vaccinated, they will still have some benefit from the vaccine because they may only get a mild case instead of a serious case.

Q: What are the long-term side effects of COVID-19 vaccination for my child?

A: Serious side effects that could cause a long-term health problem are extremely unusual following any vaccination. Almost all reactions to the COVID-19 vaccine have been mild, like fatigue or a sore arm, and only last a couple of days. Long term side effects usually happen within eight weeks of vaccination which is why the manufacturers were required to wait at least eight weeks after clinical trials before applying for Emergency Use Authorization. The health risks if children are infected with COVID-19 are much higher than the risk of vaccine side effects.

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Q: Why should my child get vaccinated against COVID-19 if children are not as susceptible to severe illness from COVID-19?

A: Since the beginning of the pandemic, over 15 million children in the U.S. have gotten COVID-19. While COVID-19 is often milder in children than adults, children can still get very sick and spread it to friends and family. Half of reported pediatric COVID-19 deaths in the United States were in children with no underlying health conditions. New COVID-19 variants are currently responsible for most infections and hospitalizations in the United States. Vaccination is the best way to keep children healthy and safe.

Q: Does my child need to get vaccinated if they already had COVID-19?

A: Yes, your child should still get the COVID-19 vaccine even if they already had COVID-19 but should wait to receive the vaccine after they recover and complete their isolation period. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine after an individual recovers from COVID-19 infection provides added protection to their immune systems. People who already had COVID-19 and do not get vaccinated after their recovery are more likely to get COVID-19 again than those who get vaccinated after their recovery. For maximum effectiveness, individuals who recently had COVID-19 may consider delaying any COVID-19 vaccination by 3 months from the start of their symptoms or positive test.

Q: How long does COVID-19 vaccination protection last?

A: Scientists are continuing to monitor how long COVID-19 vaccine protection lasts. Recent studies show that protection against the virus may decrease over time, but vaccines are still preventing against serious illness, hospitalizations, and death from COVID-19. This reduction in protection has led CDC to recommend that everyone ages 6 months and older get an updated 2023-2024 dose.

Q: Which vaccine brand can my child get?

A: At this time, the Pfizer-BioNTech (Pfizer) vaccine and Moderna COVID-19 vaccine brands are authorized for children ages 6 months and older. The Novavax vaccine is available for ages 12+ under an EUA. Children 6 months-4 years must receive the same vaccine manufacturer for all doses. Children aged 5 years and older may receive any vaccine manufacturer or brand currently available, regardless of previous doses received.

Q: Can my child receive the COVID-19 vaccine when they get other vaccines like the flu shot?

A: Yes, your child can get a COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines, including a flu vaccine, at the same visit. Experience with other vaccines has shown that the way our bodies develop protection, known as an immune response, and possible side effects after getting vaccinated are generally the same when given alone or with other vaccines. A COVID-19 vaccine appointment is another opportunity to get your child caught up on all their recommended vaccines.

Q: Is the mRNA COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 6 months through 11 years old the same one that is given to adolescents and adults?

A: The COVID -19 vaccine for children 6 months-11 years old has the same active ingredients as for people ages 12 and older. Children ages 6 months – 11 receive an age-appropriate dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine which are stored in a separate vial than mRNA COVID-19 vaccines for ages 12 and up.

Q: Is there a fertility or developmental concern with vaccinating children before they reach puberty?

A: No. There is no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause female or male fertility problems. The vaccine ingredients or antibodies developed following COVID-19 vaccination have not been found to cause any problems with becoming pregnant. Professional medical organizations serving people of reproductive age, including adolescents emphasize there is no evidence that the COVID-19 vaccine causes infertility and strongly recommend it for both men and women.

Q: What's in the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine?

A: The Novavax COVID-19 vaccine is a protein subunit-based vaccine that contains an additive, along with fats and sugars to help the vaccine work better in the body. This vaccine does not use mRNA. The ingredients are all safe and needed for the vaccine to do its job. It does not contain human cells (including fetal cells), the virus that causes COVID-19, any animal by-products including pork products, latex, preservatives, or tracking devices. It was not grown in eggs and contains no egg products.

Q: What can I do to prepare my child for their COVID-19 vaccine shots.

A: It is very common for children to experience feelings of fear or stress when receiving vaccines. Visit these resources below to learn ways you can assist your child through the vaccine process:

- [COVID-19 Vaccination for Children: Checklist for Parents and Caregivers (wa.gov)](#)
- [Before, During, and After Your Child's Shots | CDC](#)
- [9 Things to Make Shots Less Stressful for You and Your Baby | CDC](#)
- [How to Make Shots Hurt Less for Kids (health.com)](#)
- [Helping a Child Who Is Afraid of Shots (webmd.com)](#)

Q: What can I do as a provider to alleviate fear and/or pain for the youth receiving their vaccines?

A: There are methods that providers can incorporate that have been shown to alleviate some of the patient discomfort or pain associated with vaccinations. Visit the resource below to learn more:

- [ID Snapshot: How to reduce pain during vaccination | AAP News | American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

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