



Pediatric COVID-19 Vaccines: Answers to Parent Concerns

Many parents have questions about COVID-19 vaccines, which are now available to anyone age 5 years old and up. Here are answers to some of the most common questions.



How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

The COVID-19 vaccine works similarly to other vaccines your child has had. Germs such as SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, invade and multiply inside the body. The vaccine stops this by working with the body's natural immune system to recognize and make antibodies to fight these germs. After vaccination, your child has less of a chance of getting COVID-19. During clinical trials, the vaccine had 90-100% efficacy and there were no reported severe cases of COVID-19.

How do we know COVID-19 vaccines are safe for kids?

Before getting FDA emergency use authorization (EUA), clinical trials showed COVID-19 vaccines to be safe and effective for individuals age 16 and up. Trials involved tens of thousands of volunteers. The EUA process was used to allow the vaccine to be available faster, but does not compromise any safety studies or standards. After getting additional safety data for younger individuals, the FDA extended authorization first to adolescents age 12 and older and then to children age 5 and up. Clinical trials are underway for children as young as six months old. The vaccines continue to be monitored very closely. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) say that COVID-19 vaccines will have "the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history."



If children don't frequently experience severe illness with COVID-19, why do they need a COVID-19 vaccine?

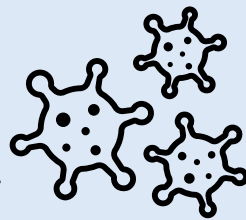
COVID-19 infections in children can range from having no symptoms to severe illness. Over 600 pediatric COVID-19 deaths have been reported. This number is lower than in adults but COVID-19 is now a top 10 cause of death for children in the United States. While rare, some children may experience multi system inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C), a condition where different body parts can become inflamed, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, or gastrointestinal organs.

A COVID-19 vaccine can prevent your child from getting and spreading the COVID-19 virus. Your child is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. In most cases, your vaccinated child won't need to quarantine after a known exposure as long as he or she doesn't have symptoms.



My child had COVID-19, do they need a vaccine?

Natural immunity to COVID-19 decreases over time. Getting a vaccine, even for people that have already recovered from COVID-19, strengthens the immune response and increases protection against COVID-19. The vaccine is recommended for children who've had a previous COVID-19 infection because natural immunity is highly variable, and the risk of reinfection after natural infection is 2 - 5 times higher than the risk of reinfection with vaccines.



Are there any children who shouldn't get a COVID-19 vaccine?

The vaccine shouldn't be given to a child with a known history of a severe allergic reaction to any of its ingredients. If this is the case, your child might be able to get a different COVID-19 vaccine in the future.

The vaccine includes the following ingredients:

mRNA, lipids ((4- hydroxybutyl)azanediyl)bis(hexane-6,1-diyl)bis(2-hexyldecanoate), 2 [(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide, 1,2-Distearoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine, and cholesterol), tromethamine, tromethamine hydrochloride, sucrose, and sodium chloride.





How many doses of the COVID-19 vaccine does my child need?

Your child will need 2 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine given at least 3 weeks apart. Children age 5-11 receive a dose that is 1/3 the dosage size for adolescents and adults.

Will my child have side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine?

Your child may have mild to moderate side effects following the COVID-19 vaccine. These side effects include fever, fatigue, headache, chills, diarrhea, and muscle and joint pain. More children experience side effects after the 2nd dose than after the 1st dose. Rare side effects include swollen lymph nodes and skin sensitivity.



What can I do for my child after the COVID-19 vaccine?

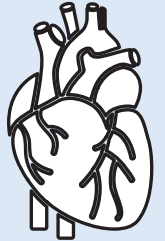


If your child is experiencing mild side effects, some things you can do include:

- Use a cool, damp cloth to help reduce redness, soreness and/or swelling at in the place where the shot was given.
- Reduce fever with a cool sponge bath.
- Offer liquids. It is normal for some children to eat less in the 24 hours after getting a vaccine.
- Ask your child's doctor if you can give your child a non-aspirin pain reliever.
- Pay extra attention to your child for a few days. If you see something that concerns you, call your child's doctor.

Will my child get myocarditis from the COVID-19 vaccine?

Myocarditis has been linked to mRNA vaccines but it is very rare. About 26 cases of myocarditis are expected per 1 million doses administered. It is more common in young males and typically arises within 7 days of vaccination. No children have died from vaccine induced myocarditis and cases fully recover in about 1 month. Vaccine induced myocarditis is much milder than COVID-19 induced myocarditis.



Do mRNA vaccines change your DNA?

No, the mRNA actually doesn't interact with your DNA at all. DNA is your genetic material and it's stored in the nucleus of a cell. The mRNA in the vaccines never gets into the nucleus. The mRNA sends instructions to your immune cells and once your immune cells have used the instructions, they break down the mRNA and get rid of it.

Can COVID-19 vaccines affect fertility?

There's no evidence that any vaccine, including those for COVID-19, causes fertility concerns. The vaccines don't affect puberty or a child's reproductive development. Experts, including the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists, have reviewed available data and recommend the COVID-19 vaccine for pregnant women or women who want to get pregnant. Among the millions of people now immunized, there are women who got the COVID-19 vaccine while pregnant and women who became pregnant after getting it. Doctors have watched these cases closely, and have reported no safety problems for women or their babies.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:

[HEALTHYCHILDREN.ORG](https://www.healthychildren.org) AND SEARCH FOR THE SCIENCE BEHIND COVID-19 VACCINES: PARENT FAQs

[MAYOCLINIC.ORG](https://www.mayoclinic.org) AND SEARCH COVID-19 VACCINES FOR KIDS

[CDC.GOV](https://www.cdc.gov) AND SEARCH FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINATION

To schedule a COVID-19 vaccine for your child call your primary care provider or visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov)