COVID-19 Vaccine Q&A with Healthcare Experts
Answers to common parental/guardian questions about the COVID-19 vaccine for children

We asked scientists and medical experts some of the most common questions parents/guardians have when deciding to vaccinate children 5-11 years old.

Q: Will it be ok to get the Covid vaccine at the same time as receiving other vaccines, such as the flu or hpv vaccines?
Yes, it is safe and effective to receive the COVID vaccine near or at the same time as receiving other common pediatric vaccines, such as Influenza or HPV.
- Poomima Kamran Kavathekar, MD MPH, General Pediatrician at HealthPartners and Regions Hospital Adjunct Assistance Professor, Pediatrics, University of Minnesota

Q: The size of children between 5-11 varies significantly. Will the 1/3 dose be as effective for a large 11 year old as a small 5 year old?
In the data submitted to the FDA, there were no differences in the immune responses to the 1/3 dose across age groups. The large number of children across all ages within 5-11 that were included in this study shows that the dose does a good job of maintaining the ability to generate a strong immune responses while minimizing adverse side effects.
- Andy Pekosz, PhD
Professor and Vice Chair
Dept. of Molecular Microbiology & Immunology
Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

Q: Where do I sign up to get the vaccine for my child?
Vaccines for 5-11-year-olds will be available at pharmacies, pediatricians’ offices, children’s hospitals, and community vaccination events. To sign up for an appointment to get the vaccine for your child, visit https://www.vaccines.gov and check your state and county health department websites.
- Sarah Brewer, PhD, MPA Assistant Professor of Family Medicine, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus Associate Director, Colorado Children’s Outcomes Network

Q: If COVID risk is low for kids, why should I rush to get my kid vaccinated?
Vaccinating our children can provide immense benefits to reducing infection of others who may be at more risk, including grandparents, teachers, and other families. Recent research suggests that vaccination of 5-11 year olds is expected to prevent 600,000 infections over the next 4 months.
- Shaun Truelove, PhD
Assistant Scientist, International Health
Global Disease Epidemiology and Control
Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health
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Q: What concerns if any are there with this shot and young boys having reactions?

While there were a small number of vaccinated young men in the 16-29 year age group who developed myocarditis after receiving the adult dose of the vaccine, there were no cases of myocarditis identified in the 5-to-11-year old vaccinated participants who received the pediatric dose.

- Poomima Kamran Kavathekar, MD MPH, General Pediatrician at HealthPartners and Regions Hospital
  Adjunct Assistance Professor, Pediatrics, University of Minnesota Twin Cities

Q: A friend mentioned that she intends to “wait and see” if the vaccine is safe before she vaccinates her child. Can you address that the process was rigorous and scientific and therefore safe?

The clinical trial process unfolded like it would any for any therapeutic product. There were no corners cut regarding safety or efficacy. The only difference between this vaccine development process and other processes is that certain stages overlapped. That is because we are in a pandemic and are trying to reduce morbidity and mortality related to COVID.

- Rupali J. Limaye, PhD
  Director, Behavioral & Implementation Science,
  International Vaccine Access Center
  Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Q: If the mRNA vaccines are amazing and the science is clear, why haven’t they been used before this?

mRNA vaccines are amazing and are based on several decades of research. It took the huge financial investment in research and manufacturing capacity that was stimulated by the pandemic to bring these vaccines to the public.

- William Moss, MD
  Executive Director, International Vaccine Access Center
  Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Q: Can you provide guidance for post-vaccination mask use?

COVID-19 vaccines are successful at preventing hospitalization and death, but vaccinated people can still get and spread COVID-19. Because there are long-term effects of infection, it is important to use multiple layers of protection even after your child gets the vaccine, including masks while indoors.

- Manya Magnus, PhD, MPH
  Professor and Interim Chair, Department of Epidemiology
  Milken Institute School of Public Health, George Washington University
Q: My child already tested positive for COVID-19 and has antibodies, so do they still need to get vaccinated?

Yes, the COVID-19 vaccine is recommended even for children who have had a COVID-19 infection. The vaccine may provide better and longer lasting protection.

-Sarah Schaffer DeRoo, MD, MA
Attending Physician, Children’s Health Center
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, George Washington University

Q: I had heard that the recommendation would be for a single shot for kids this age, even for Pfizer. Is this the case or will it be the normal two-shot regimen?

Although some countries have recommended a single dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children 12 years and older, the emergency use authorization issued by the FDA here in the US is for two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine spaced three weeks apart for children 5 to 11 years of age.

- William Moss, MD
Executive Director, International Vaccine Access Center
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Q: I have a child turning 12 soon. Do I get the full dose at 12 or try to hurry up and get them a smaller dose before he turns 12?

Decisions regarding kids at age transitions are always challenging, there is nothing “magical” that suddenly happens to a child on their birthdate. The important thing is to get the vaccine as soon as it becomes available so we can increase the protective immunity in this age group as fast as possible.

- Andy Pekosz, PhD
Professor and Vice Chair
Dept. of Molecular Microbiology & Immunology
Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

Q: Will kids need a third shot/booster eventually like many adults?

This will be determined as we see more and more children receive their first and second doses with close monitoring of their immune responses. This immune response will help us determine whether a booster will be needed and, if so, the optimal timing and interval between doses.

-Poornima Kamran Kavathekar, MD MPH,
General Pediatrician at HealthPartners and Regions Hospital
Adjunct Assistance Professor, Pediatrics, University of Minnesota Twin Cities
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Q: If my adolescent son gets vaccinated, should we hold him out of sports for any period of time because the small risk of myocarditis?

No, your child does not need to withdraw from sports after vaccination. Although we do not yet know the risk of myocarditis after vaccination with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in children 5 to 11 years of age, it is expected to be very rare. Should your son develop chest pain or shortness of breath, or a feeling that his heart is beating fast or pounding, you should immediately consult your health care provider.

- William Moss, MD
Executive Director, International Vaccine Access Center
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Q: For us parents still in the waiting phase, how will this impact the vaccine becoming available for children under the age of 5?

Studies of COVID-19 vaccines in children younger than 5 years are ongoing but we do not expect results and recommendations until early 2022. Recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in children 5 to 11 years old will not change this timeline but we will learn more about vaccine protection.

- William Moss, MD
Executive Director, International Vaccine Access Center
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Q: Will the youngest kids in this tier likely suffer stronger side effects after receiving the shots?

There wasn’t any difference in the side effects reported across all ages within this study, indicating the dose was well tolerated by all ages. It’s not just about the height/weight differences across age groups but about basic differences in immune systems and none of the data reported showed any major differences across the ages of 5-11.

- Andy Pekosz, PhD
Professor and Vice Chair
Dept. of Molecular Microbiology & Immunology
Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

Q: Can you tell me when the vaccine will provide protection? Meaning, after my child gets the shot, are they protected immediately?

Like adults, children are considered to be fully protected by the COVID-19 vaccine approximately 14 days after receiving the second dose of the vaccine. This is because it takes time for our bodies to respond to the vaccine and develop the expected immune protection. As a result, it is still important to have children wear masks and engage in other COVID preventive behaviors after vaccination.

- Sarah Schaffer DeRoo, MD, MA
Attending Physician, Children’s Health Center
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, George Washington University
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**Q: What do asymptomatic infection among children after vaccination and what transmission could look like to household members and others?**

While this was not specifically studied in the Pfizer trial, knowing that vaccinating adults resulted in decreasing asymptomatic transmission of COVID-19 allows us to anticipate the same reduction in transmission of asymptomatic infection after vaccinating 5-to-11-year-olds.

- Poornima Kamran Kavathekar, MD MPH,
  General Pediatrician at HealthPartners and Regions Hospital
  Adjunct Assistance Professor, Pediatrics, University of Minnesota Twin Cities

**Q: Is the vaccine safe for children who have not gone through puberty?**

Yes, the vaccine is safe for children who have not yet gone through puberty. The vaccine does not affect the hormones that cause pubertal development in children.

-Sarah Schaffer DeRoo, MD, MA
  Attending Physician, Children’s Health Center
  Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, George Washington University

**Q: What can you say about the vaccine and fertility?**

There is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines affect fertility and there is no scientific reason to think vaccines could impact fertility. Thousands of women have gotten pregnant after receiving COVID-19 vaccines.

- Sarah Brewer, PhD, MPA Assistant Professor of Family Medicine, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus
  Associate Director, Colorado Children’s Outcomes Network

Scan this QR code to find out more about the COVID-19 vaccine!