

COVID-19 Vaccine for Pediatric Patients Aged 5 and Over



A pediatric dose of the Pfizer vaccine for those aged 5-11 years old has been recommended by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The vaccine is given in a 2-dose series, spaced 21 days apart.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for my child?

The FDA has reviewed the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine through initial large studies and monitoring of millions of people who have received the vaccine all over the world. These vaccines are continuously undergoing additional studies to confirm the vaccine's safety.

Does the vaccine work?

According to data reported by Pfizer and reviewed by the FDA and CDC, the vaccine is more than 94% effective in preventing COVID-19. If your child does get infected after being vaccinated, the mRNA vaccines are highly effective in preventing hospitalization and death from COVID-19. The effectiveness of the vaccine will continue to be monitored.

Does the vaccine have any side effects?

The most common side effects of the vaccines include pain and swelling at the injection site, fever, chills, fatigue, and headache. These are common for many vaccines because a vaccine triggers an immune response. The side effects should go away within a few days. An ice pack can be used on the injection site for comfort. If your child develops a fever, headache, or other symptoms, please contact your pediatrician to talk about ways to help, like acetaminophen (Tylenol®), or any other concerns you may have.

When is my child considered fully vaccinated after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?

People aged 5-17 are considered fully vaccinated 2 weeks after their second dose of the Pfizer vaccine.

Why is the dose based on age, not weight?

- Vaccines do not circulate inside the bloodstream the way medicines do, where the dose and body weight affect the concentration of medication.
- The vaccine helps the immune system, regardless of body size, to create a strong immune response. Children aged 5 -11 have strong immune systems so they can create a similar number of antibodies with a smaller dose than teens and adults.

If my child is 11, should I wait until they are 12 to get a larger dose?

If my child is 12 or older, can I get a smaller dose to possibly decrease any side effects?

The age recommendations were based on close scientific reviews of the study data. We follow the recommendations to assure the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine.

What if my child has allergies to vaccines?

True allergic reactions to mRNA vaccines have been rare. The FDA and CDC are monitoring vaccine reactions closely. If your child has a history of anaphylaxis or severe allergic reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine, or any other vaccine or vaccine component, consult your pediatrician or allergist before your child receives the COVID-19 vaccine.

If children are less likely than adults to get seriously ill, why should I vaccinate my child against COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a complex and unpredictable illness. Symptoms can be mild or severe and life-threatening. There have been long-lasting effects in some people of all ages.

I heard the COVID-19 vaccine can cause myocarditis. What is myocarditis? Is this true?

Myocarditis is an inflammation, or irritation, of the heart muscle. Pericarditis is an irritation of the thin sack that surrounds the heart. In both myocarditis and pericarditis, inflammation starts due to a trigger, typically an infection or other immune system response. The most common symptoms are chest pain, shortness of breath, and a sensation of irregular heartbeats (palpitations).

Myocarditis has been reported after COVID-19 vaccination but it can also happen after a COVID-19 infection. The studies suggest that the risk of myocarditis happening is much higher after a COVID-19 infection than after receiving the vaccine. It is a rare complication of vaccination and typically is much milder than when it occurs after a COVID-19 infection.

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Those with post-vaccine myocarditis were quickly discharged (mostly after 1 day) and fully recovered quickly. Multiple sources of data in this country and abroad show that the benefits of vaccination against COVID-19 far outweigh the risks of vaccination.

We have a strong surveillance system to quickly identify any issues and we will keep updating recommendations as new data becomes available. Your pediatrician will be happy to discuss any questions you may have about benefits and risks.

Can the vaccine give my child COVID-19? Does it contain a live virus?

No. Since the COVID-19 vaccine does not include the live virus that causes COVID-19; your child cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine.

Can my child receive other vaccines, like the flu shot, with, before, or soon after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines and other vaccines can be given without regard to timing. This includes being able to get the COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines on the same day. Be sure that all your child's vaccines are up to date, including the Flu vaccine, to best protect against all vaccine-preventable illnesses.

After my child is fully vaccinated against COVID-19, do they need to wear a mask?

Yes. Currently the CDC recommends that your child continue to wear a mask in indoor public spaces since the vaccination of other people in these spaces is likely unknown.

After my child is fully vaccinated against COVID-19, do they need to quarantine if they are exposed to someone with COVID-19?

No. You should monitor your child for symptoms if they have been exposed to COVID-19. If symptoms such as fever or cough develop, please contact your pediatrician.

Will my child need a booster dose?

While it is possible that your child may eventually need a booster COVID-19 vaccine, this is not currently recommended for the 5 to 11-year-old group or the 12 to 17-year-old age group.

Those in the 12 to 17-year-old age group who are immunocompromised are recommended to receive a 3rd dose of the vaccine at least 1 month after completing the first 2 doses.

Those over 18 years old with underlying medical conditions or at an increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission due to where they live or work, may qualify for a booster based on their own benefits and risks. If you have questions or think your child may qualify, please contact your pediatrician.

How do I make an appointment for my child to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Children who are established patients of UPMC's Children's Community Pediatrics (CCP) can schedule a vaccine at a UPMC CCP office or clinic most convenient to you by visiting [ChildrensPeds.com/COVIDVaccine](https://www.childrenspeds.com/COVIDVaccine).

If your child is not a CCP patient, anyone can schedule a COVID-19 vaccine by visiting [Vaccine.UPMC.com](https://www.vaccine.upmc.com) or calling 844-UPMCVAC (844-876-2822) between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., seven days a week.

To schedule a vaccine in Potter County Pennsylvania, please call 814-274-5460.

Why do I have to schedule the COVID-19 vaccine for my 5-year-old and my 13-year-old separately?

While both age groups (5 to 11-years and 12+) will receive the two-dose Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, younger children between the ages of 5 and 11 will receive one-third the dose given to adolescents and adults. To ensure the safety of your child, we require families to schedule each child separately so they receive the proper dose based on their age.

- To learn more about pediatric care, please visit [childrenspeds.com/health-resources/sick-care](https://www.childrenspeds.com/health-resources/sick-care).
- For the latest news about UPMC and the COVID-19 vaccine, please visit [UPMC.com/COVIDVaccine](https://www.upmc.com/COVIDVaccine).
- To learn more about the vaccine, please visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus/vaccine](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/vaccine).

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