

Frequently Asked Questions About COVID-19 Vaccines for Infants, Children and Teens

Q: How old do you have to be to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

A: COVID-19 vaccines are recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for infants, children, and teens as young as 6 months old. Moderna and Pfizer offer vaccines at a lower dose for children in different age groups.

Q: Is parental/guardian consent required?

A: Yes. Children under age 18 years who are not emancipated must have parental or legal guardian consent for any vaccine. A parent or legal guardian generally should accompany the minor to receive the vaccine, unless the administration of the vaccine occurs in a physician's office, school-based or school-associated clinic setting or similar setting. Consent is still required.

Q: What are the benefits of vaccinating my child?

A: Children who get COVID-19 can get very sick, can require treatment in a hospital, and in rare situations, can even die. After getting COVID-19, children and teens can also experience short-term or long-term health problems. Vaccines can help prevent children from getting really sick even if they do get infected and help prevent serious short- and long-term complications of COVID-19. Vaccination can also keep them in school and daycare and safely participating in sports, playdates, and other group activities.

Q: If most cases of COVID-19 are minor, why get vaccinated?

A: COVID-19 can make babies, children, and teens of any age very sick and sometimes need hospital treatment. In rare situations, the complications from COVID-19 can lead to death. There is no way to tell in advance how children will be affected by COVID-19. Although children with underlying medical conditions are more likely to get severe COVID-19, healthy children without any conditions can also experience severe illness. Approximately 1 in 3 children younger than 18 years old hospitalized with COVID-19 have no underlying conditions.

Q: My child has already had COVID-19. Isn't natural immunity enough?

A: COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for all children age 6 months and older, even those who have previously had COVID-19. People can get added protection by getting vaccinated after having been infected with COVID-19. Prior infection does not prevent reinfection. And people who have had a prior infection and are vaccinated have stronger antibody protection, which can help shield against future variants. For children who have been infected with COVID-19, the next dose can be delayed 3 months from when symptoms started or, if they did not have symptoms, when they received a positive test result.

Q: Are the vaccines for babies and children different than the vaccines for adults?

A: Yes. Lower doses of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines were created to generate the needed immune response for that age group. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for ages 12 years and older is a dose of 30 micrograms. The Pfizer dose for children ages 5-11 years is one-third of that dose at 10 micrograms. The Pfizer dose for children ages 6 months to 4 years is one-tenth of the adult dose at 3 micrograms. Moderna's vaccine for adults is a dose of 100 micrograms. The same dose can be given to adolescents ages 12 years through 17 years. The dose for children ages 6 years through 11 years is half the adolescent/adult dose at 50 micrograms. The dose for children ages 6 months to 5 years is one-fourth the adolescent/adult dose at 25 micrograms.

Q: I have heard about myocarditis happening to kids after being vaccinated. Should I be worried?

A: Myocarditis is an inflammation of the heart muscle that can reduce the heart's ability to pump and can cause rapid or abnormal heart rhythms. Rare cases of [myocarditis](#) and pericarditis (inflammation of outer lining of the heart) have been reported after children, teens, and young adults have received a COVID-19 vaccine, particularly in males ages 12-39 years. Signs and symptoms of myocarditis include chest pain, fatigue, shortness of breath, and arrhythmias. Well-recognized causes of myocarditis include some common viral illnesses – including COVID-19, bacteria like strep and mycoplasma, and even medications like antibiotics. Most people who experienced myocarditis following vaccination recover from it on their own. The risk also can be reduced with a longer interval between the first and second dose of 8 weeks. Myocarditis and pericarditis are much more common if you get COVID-19, and the risks to the

heart from COVID-19 infection can be more severe.

Q: How long does it take for the vaccine to work?

A: A person is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after completion of the primary series. Some primary series include two doses, while the new Pfizer three-dose vaccine for children 6 months through 4 years includes three doses. This means it could take anywhere from five weeks to 13 weeks.

Q: What are the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines?

A: Not everyone experiences side effects. If any, they tend to be mild and short in duration. The most common side effects include soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site; fever and/or chills; headache; fatigue; muscle or joint pain; or irritability. These side effects are normal and a sign that your body is creating an immune response to protect you from COVID-19. Side effects typically last one to two days and may increase with the second dose.

Q: Do COVID-19 vaccines cause infertility, or impact a child's future fertility?

A: There is currently no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause fertility problems.

Q: Will COVID-19 vaccines change someone's DNA?

A: No. [COVID-19 vaccines](#) will not alter a person's DNA. The Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines are messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines. These vaccines provide instructions for the body to create the harmless surface or "spike" protein found in the virus that causes COVID-19; the body responds by building antibodies to destroy the protein.

Q: Do COVID-19 vaccines implant people with a tracking microchip?

A: No. Vaccine injections do not contain tracking microchips.

Q: How can I make an appointment? Where can youth be vaccinated?

A: There are hundreds of locations at which youth can be vaccinated across the state, including pediatrician's offices, vaccine clinics, local health departments, hospitals, community health centers, pharmacies, and more, listed at gettheshot.coronavirus.ohio.gov. Many locations offer walk-in appointments.

Q: Can all children be vaccinated at a pharmacy, or do they have to be a certain age?

A: If you are considering vaccination at a pharmacy, check with the pharmacy regarding how young they vaccinate. Pharmacists and pharmacy interns may vaccinate children as young as 3 years of age, subject to certain requirements.

Q: What should my child do before a vaccine appointment?

A: Children should eat and drink plenty of water before getting a vaccination. This is especially important for children and teens because [fainting after any vaccine is more common among adolescents, and often the result of high anxiety or dehydration](#). Children should get plenty of rest the night before an appointment if possible. On the day of the appointment, they should wear a short-sleeve or sleeveless shirt to allow easy access to the upper arm or shorts or a dress to access the thigh. If it's a colder day, layer with a cardigan or jacket that is easy to remove quickly.

Q: What should I do if my child is feeling anxious?

A: Parents can take [simple steps to help prepare their child for the vaccination and make the experience less stressful](#). Ask your child to breathe slowly and deeply before the injection and to think about something relaxing. They should avoid looking at the syringe and relax the arm where they will receive the injection. Parents can also calm their children's anxieties by distracting them by talking to them while they are getting the vaccination.

Q: I've seen a lot of rumors on social media about vaccines. How can I tell what is true?

A: The internet is filled with dangerous misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines, and it can be difficult to know what to trust. The best thing you can do is educate yourself about the vaccines with information from trustworthy sources, including your doctor. Talk to your child's doctor or another qualified healthcare provider to get the facts. Some infants may benefit by using a pacifier or breast feeding after their vaccination.

Q: How is vaccine safety monitored?

A: COVID-19 vaccines have undergone – and continue to undergo – the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history. Parents and caregivers can register and enroll their child in [v-safe](#), which provides personalized and confidential health check-ins after COVID-19 vaccination. Patients, caregivers, and vaccine providers can report serious health events occurring after vaccination to the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System](#) (VAERS). CDC and FDA review VAERS data to identify potential safety concerns. CDC and FDA continue to monitor vaccines, keep people informed of findings, and use data to make COVID-19 vaccination recommendations.

For more information, visit: coronavirus.ohio.gov

Q: Can you get a COVID-19 vaccination at the same time as another vaccination?

A: In most cases, COVID-19 vaccines can be given at the same time as other routine childhood vaccinations. Each injection would be given in a different injection site. It's best to talk to your child's doctor about the best ways to stay up-to-date on all recommended and required childhood immunizations.

Q: Can children get booster doses?

A: Everyone ages 5 years and older should get a COVID-19 booster, when eligible. Children ages 12 and older who have a weakened immune system should also get a second booster, when eligible. The [CDC offers a tool to help determine when you can get your booster](#) based on your age, if you have a weakened immune system, and when you received your last dose.

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For additional information, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

For answers to your COVID-19 questions, call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1- 833-427-5634).

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. If you or a loved one are experiencing anxiety related to the coronavirus pandemic, help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call the COVID-19 CareLine at 1-800-720-9616.