

## Children and COVID-19 Vaccines

Nearly 4 million children in the US have been infected with COVID-19 as of May 2021.

While most children have had mild or no symptoms, thousands have been hospitalized and several hundred have died. Children with underlying conditions are more likely to experience severe effects of COVID-19, but even healthy children can be severely affected. Children can spread COVID-19 to others and also can have long-term effects that last months. For these reasons, children need to be protected from COVID-19.

### What Vaccines Are Available?

Currently, 3 vaccines are authorized for adults in the United States. In studies of tens of thousands of people, these vaccines were safe and effective. The vaccine made by Pfizer was recently authorized for children 12 years and older. Two doses of this vaccine are recommended to be given 3 weeks apart. The other 2 vaccines were authorized for persons 18 years and older but are expected to be available for teenagers soon. Studies in younger children as young as age 6 months are ongoing and if these studies show that they are safe and effective, vaccines could be available for children 6 months and older by late 2021 or early 2022.

### Are These Vaccines Safe?

Children who received the Pfizer vaccine in the studies were much less likely to get sick from COVID-19. Although these vaccines were developed quickly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, no steps were skipped in testing for safety. Like adults, children can have adverse reactions from the COVID-19 vaccines, including sore arms, muscle aches, fever, and chills. In most, the adverse reactions are mild, lasting 1 to 2 days, and symptoms can be treated with Tylenol (acetaminophen). These adverse reactions are signs that the child's immune system is building protection in response to the vaccine. Because the vaccine does not contain the COVID-19 virus, it is not possible to get sick with COVID-19 from the vaccine.

### How Can Parents Protect Their Children?

The best way to protect children is for them to get the COVID-19 vaccine when it is authorized for their age group, even if they have had COVID-19 in the past. Children are considered fully vaccinated 2 weeks after the second dose of the vaccine. Parents who are feeling unsure about the COVID-19 vaccine should speak with their pediatrician who can answer their questions. Studies are underway to learn how long the vaccines provide protection.

Children who are too young to be vaccinated can be protected in other ways. We now know a lot about how the virus spreads. Chil-

### Children and the COVID-19 vaccine

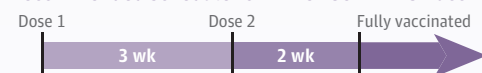
Although rare, some children with COVID-19 infection may experience severe disease, hospitalization, or death. Children infected with COVID-19 can spread the virus to others or experience long-term effects that may last for months.



The Pfizer vaccine is currently authorized for children 12 y and older. Children should receive the COVID-19 vaccine when it is authorized for their age group.

The Pfizer vaccine is given as 2 doses, 3 wk apart. Children are considered fully vaccinated 2 wk after the second dose of the vaccine.

#### Recommended schedule for Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine



Common adverse reactions from the COVID-19 vaccine include sore arms, muscle aches, fever, and chills. Because the vaccine does not contain the COVID-19 virus, it is not possible to get sick with COVID-19 from the vaccine.



Unvaccinated children or those too young to receive the vaccine should continue to practice physical distancing, wear a mask, and wash their hands.

dren should continue with physical distancing (at least 6 ft whenever possible), wearing masks, and washing their hands. Outdoor activities are safer than indoor ones, and crowded events, even outdoors, should be avoided.

### What Else Can Parents Do?

Many children have fallen behind on well-child checks and childhood vaccines during the pandemic, so visit your child's physician. The COVID-19 vaccine can be given with other vaccines so it is a great time to catch up. Finally, to keep themselves, their children, and our communities healthy, parents also need to be vaccinated with the COVID-19 vaccine.

#### For More Information

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/covid19-vaccine-what-parents-need-to-know>

<https://services.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2021/american-academy-of-pediatrics-guidance-the-covid-19-vaccine-is-safe-effective-and-should-be-given-to-all-who-are-eligible/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>

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