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COVID-19 vaccines for children ages 6 months and older

COVID-19 vaccines are used to prepare the body's immune system to protect against COVID-19.

Information

COVID-19 vaccines protect people from getting COVID-19. These vaccines teach your child's body how to defend against the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19.

WHY CHILDREN AND TEENS SHOULD GET VACCINATED

It's true that most children and teens are at lower risk from becoming very sick from COVID-19. But low risk does not mean no risk. Children and teens can:

- Become infected with COVID-19
- Become seriously ill from COVID-19 and need to be hospitalized
- Have serious short- and long-term effects or complications from COVID-19
- Die from COVID-19, although this is very rare
- Spread COVID-19 to others, including those at risk for serious illness, such as grandparents

Children with underlying medical conditions are more at risk for severe illness from COVID-19. So, vaccination is very important to help protect against the virus.

There are many good reasons to have your child or teen get a COVID-19 vaccination:

- It will protect your child from serious illness if they do get COVID-19.
- It will protect other people in the family at risk for serious illness from COVID-19.
- It is a safer way to build protection than from getting COVID-19.

ABOUT COVID-19 mRNA VACCINES FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

There are two mRNA COVID-19 vaccines currently approved for use in the United States, the Pfizer-BioNTech and the Moderna COVID-19 vaccines. These 2024-2025 mRNA vaccines protect against the current strains of the COVID-19 virus.

Children ages 6 months to 17 years can get either the 2024-2025 Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna mRNA vaccine.

- COVID-19 mRNA vaccines use messenger RNA (mRNA) to tell cells in the body how to briefly create a harmless piece of spike protein that is unique to the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Cells then get rid of the mRNA.
- This spike protein triggers an immune response inside the body, making antibodies that protect against COVID-19. Your child's immune system then learns to attack the SARS-CoV-2 virus if they are ever exposed to it.

The COVID-19 vaccine given to children and teens has the same active ingredients as the vaccine given to adults. Dosage is based on the child's age on the day of vaccination. It is not based on the child's size or weight.

SUBUNIT VACCINE

The Novavax vaccine is a protein subunit vaccine. The vaccine includes harmless pieces of the spike protein that causes COVID-19. The vaccine triggers the body to develop antibodies to protect you from the virus. The 2024-2025 Novavax vaccine also protects against current strains of the COVID-19 virus.

VACCINATION SCHEDULE

Your child's vaccination schedule is based on age and vaccination history.

Children ages 6 months to 4 years who have never received a COVID-19 vaccine before can have 2 doses of the 2024-2025 Moderna vaccine or 3 doses of the 2024-2025 Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

Children ages 12 and older have never received a COVID-19 vaccine before can have 2 doses of the 2024-2025 Novavax vaccine.

Children who have had a COVID-19 vaccine before can have the following shots:

- Children ages 6 months to 4 years who got 2 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, should get 1 dose of the 2024-2025 Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine.
- Children ages 6 months to 4 years who got 1 dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, should get 2 doses of the 2024-2025 Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine.
- Children ages 6 months to 4 years who got 1 or more doses of the Moderna vaccine, should get 1 dose of the 2024-2025 Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.
- Children ages 12 and older who have had a COVID-19 vaccine before can have 1 dose of the 2024-2025 Novavax vaccine.

Regardless of vaccination history, to be up to date on their shots

- Children ages 5 to 11 years should receive 1 dose of the 2024-2025 Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine or the 2024-2025 Moderna vaccine.
- Children ages 12 years and older should receive 1 dose of the 2024-2025 Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine or the 2024-2025 Moderna vaccine.
- Children ages 12 and older who have had a COVID-19 vaccine before can have 1 dose of the 2024-2025 Novavax vaccine. If they have never had a COVID-19 vaccine before, they should get 2 doses of the Novavax vaccine.

VACCINE MYTHS

COVID-19 vaccines:

- **Do not** contain any live virus, and they cannot give children COVID-19
- **Do not** affect or interfere with children's genes (DNA)
- **Do not** affect or interfere with fertility or future fertility in children

To get up-to-date accurate information about COVID-19 vaccines, go to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website:

- COVID-19 vaccines - www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/index.html [https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/index.html]

VACCINE SIDE EFFECTS

While COVID-19 vaccines will not make children sick, they may cause certain side effects and flu-like symptoms. This is normal. These symptoms are a sign that your child's body is making antibodies against the virus. Common side effects include:

- Pain, redness, or swelling on the arm (or leg up to age 3) where they got the shot
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Swollen lymph nodes

Some side effects from the shot may affect your child's ability to do daily activities, but any side effects will go away in a few days. Even if your child has side effects, they should get the second shot if needed. Any side effects from the vaccine are far less dangerous than the potential for serious illness or death from COVID-19.

HOW TO GET THE VACCINE

There are several ways to find vaccination providers near you.

- Ask your child's health care provider if they offer COVID-19 vaccines for children and teens.
- Check your local pharmacy's website or call them to see if they offer vaccines for children and teens.
- Contact your state or local health department [https://www.cdc.gov/public-health-gateway/php/communications-resources/health-department-directories.html] to find additional vaccination locations in the area.
- Go to the CDC website Vaccines.gov [https://www.vaccines.gov] .
- Check the CDC's Vaccines for Children (VFC) program [https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines-for-children/vfc-information-for-parents/index.html] that provides no-cost vaccines to American Indian, Alaska Native, Medicaid-eligible, uninsured, and underinsured children.

Learn what to expect when you get your COVID-19 vaccine.

VACCINE SAFETY

The safety of vaccines is the top priority, and COVID-19 vaccines for children have passed rigorous safety standards before approval. They continue to be closely monitored to ensure they are safe and effective.

Serious health events from COVID-19 vaccines, such as an allergic reaction, are rare.

Rare cases of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of the outer lining of the heart) have been reported in children and teens ages 5 years and older after getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

- This reaction has tended to occur more often in male adolescents and young adults ages 12 to 39 years. However, it also has occurred in females, in other age groups, after other doses, and after receiving the Novavax vaccine.
- It occurs more often after getting a second dose, usually within 7 days after vaccination. Studies show that this rare risk may be reduced by waiting 8 weeks between the first and second dose.
- With proper care and rest, most people who had the reaction got better quickly without any lasting effects.
- For people who had this rare reaction, it is important to talk with a cardiologist (heart doctor) about how and when to return to exercise and sports.

Symptoms of myocarditis and pericarditis include:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Fast-beating heart, fluttering, or pounding heart

If your child or teenager has any of these symptoms, get medical help right away.

Alternative Names

Vaccines for COVID-19 - children and teens; COVID-19 vaccinations for children and teens; COVID-19 shots for children and teens; Vaccinations for COVID-19 - children and teens; COVID-19 immunizations for children and teens; COVID-19 prevention - vaccines for children and teens; mRNA vaccine for children and teens - COVID-19

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