

# FAQ COVID-19 Vaccine for Kids



## Q What vaccine is available for children?

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control have approved the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine for children 5-18 years old. The vaccine is administered into the arm muscle in 2 doses given three weeks apart. Maximum immunity is achieved two weeks after the second dose.

## Q Is the vaccine dose different in children than in teenagers and adults?

The dose for children ages 5-11 is 10 micrograms, and for adolescents 12 years and older it is 30 micrograms. The reason that younger children have a smaller dose is because they have a more robust immune system and a relatively smaller dose creates strong antibodies to protect them.

## Q How effective is the vaccine in children?

Studies show that the COVID-19 vaccine in children ages 5-11 years is over 90% effective at preventing children from getting COVID-19, and it is even more effective at preventing serious and long-term disease if a child is exposed. This data is similar to what we have seen in the hundreds of millions of adults and adolescents who have been fully vaccinated over the past year.

## Q What is myocarditis and can my child get that from the vaccine?

A small number of adolescents and young adults have experienced a temporary inflammation of the heart called myocarditis. These cases are very rare and the symptoms completely resolve. If you get the COVID-19 virus however, you are ten times more likely to get myocarditis and symptoms are much more severe.

## Q Are there any children who should not get the vaccine?

Any child with a known allergy to one of the vaccine's components, mainly polyethylene glycol, which is commonly used in medications, should not receive the vaccine. The likelihood of an allergic reaction is extremely rare and is treatable if it does occur. Just like adults, all children are monitored for 15 minutes after receiving the vaccine, and 30 minutes if they have a history of anaphylaxis to food or medications. If you have any questions about your child's specific allergies, please speak to your child's pediatrician.

## Q If children are less likely to get sick from COVID-19, why do they need a vaccine?

More than 6 million children in the US have been infected with COVID-19. Over 8,000 children in the US have been hospitalized and sadly many have died, making COVID-19 a leading cause of death in children. Many more have developed chronic symptoms after being infected with COVID-19 such as fatigue, chest pain, dizziness, body aches, and anxiety. It is likely that every child will be exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19 at least once, and each exposure puts them at risk for serious and long-term effects. Getting your child vaccinated is the best way to keep them safe.

## Q Do children need a booster dose?

A booster dose is an extra dose over and above the initial two that are recommended, and there is currently no recommendation for a booster dose for children at this time. Adolescents who have weakened immune systems should receive an additional dose one month after completing the initial two doses.

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## Q What does Emergency Use Authorization mean?

In public health emergencies, the experts at the FDA can decide if the benefits of a vaccine justify a safe and rapid process to authorize its use in children. This is called an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). Under the EUA that was approved by the FDA for the pediatric COVID-19 vaccine, the FDA maintained its strict standards while making decisions more quickly than usual.

## Q What should I know about the development of the vaccine?

While the vaccine was developed quickly, it was not rushed, and all necessary steps to create a safe and effective vaccine were strictly followed as they are for all vaccines. The reason the COVID-19 vaccine could be created both quickly and safely was based on three things. First, scientists and pharmaceutical companies received worldwide financial support to research and develop a life-saving vaccine. Second, scientists were able to perform several steps in the development process at the same time, unlike the standard process where there are pauses between certain steps. Finally, widespread public support and over 150,000 people eager to participate in the trials allowed clinical trials to start rapidly, something that often takes months or years to accomplish.

## Q Are there potential long-term side effects of the vaccine?

There is no scientific evidence that the COVID-19 vaccine can cause long-term side effects, including problems with fertility. Like any vaccine, the vaccine particles function to show our immune system what the COVID-19 virus looks like which allows our natural immunity to create strong antibodies ready to protect us when we are exposed to the real COVID-19 virus. The Pfizer vaccine particles, called messenger RNA, completely dissolve and are eliminated within days, leaving our immune system smarter and more prepared with our antibody armor than we were before. The particles do not come in contact with or affect a person's DNA. And as they completely dissolve, there is no method for the vaccine to cause long-term effects.

## Q My child had COVID-19. Should they still get vaccinated?

Yes. While a previous infection provides some natural immunity, it is unclear how long the protection lasts, and people can get seriously ill with COVID-19 more than once. Some people do not respond with strong immunity even when they get infected. Studies show that the vaccine provides longer-lasting immunity than getting the COVID-19 virus.