



Tough Questions: COVID-19 Vaccines for Teens

Q. Why should parents consider getting their kids vaccinated?

A. Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect your whole family from COVID-19. Getting vaccinated will also help your child and your family get back to a normal way of life. When your child is protected from COVID, they will be able to stay in the classroom, miss fewer days of school, and safely return to the social activities they enjoy.

Q. Is the vaccine necessary? Isn't COVID less risky for kids?

A. While it is true that children and teens have a lower risk of getting severely ill from COVID, they *can* get infected and get sick from the virus. Some children have developed serious and long-term complications from COVID, and some have died. About twice as many children have died from COVID as typically die from the flu. Unvaccinated children can also spread the virus to others.

Q. How was the vaccine studied in this age group? Was the process rushed?

A. The Pfizer vaccine was thoroughly studied in this age group. No steps were rushed or skipped. More than 2,000 children were studied in a randomized, placebo-controlled study, which is the “gold standard.” None of the children who received the vaccine became infected with COVID, showing the vaccine is highly effective at preventing infection.

Q. Will vaccines eventually be available for younger children? When?

A. Studies of the vaccines in younger children are ongoing and a vaccine could be approved for children under 12 later this year. Because the doses may need to be adjusted in younger children, these trials can take longer. In the meantime, children who are not able to get the vaccine should continue masking and physical distancing and stay up to date on regular vaccinations.





Q. What are some of the possible side effects of the vaccines?

A. Side effects are a normal part of vaccination. Side effects for kids in the Pfizer trial were similar to side effects adults experience after the COVID vaccine, and similar to the side effects of other childhood vaccines. After the COVID vaccine, children may have mild side effects like fatigue, headaches, and soreness on the arm where they got the shot.

The benefits of receiving the COVID vaccine and being protected from COVID far outweigh the potential side effects. Talk with your child’s doctor if you have any concerns about the vaccine. They can help you balance the possible risks and side effects of vaccination with the risks of COVID.

Q. Could there be other long-term side effects from the vaccine?

A. It’s very unlikely. Children in the Pfizer trial were followed for up to two months after their second dose, and none of the participants experienced serious side effects.

We know from history that any serious side effects of vaccines will show up during this two-month time period. No vaccines have been found to cause long-term safety problems in the months or years after vaccination. And vaccines do not cause Autism or infertility.

If you have any concerns about the vaccine and long-term side effects, talk with your child’s doctor. They can help you balance the theoretical risks of vaccination with the risks of COVID.

Q. When and where should children get vaccinated?

A. Children can get the vaccine wherever Pfizer vaccines are offered. This includes pharmacies, mass vaccination events, and some doctors’ offices. Kids under 18 will need a parent or guardian present to sign a consent form. Talk with your child’s doctor as soon as possible about how to time the COVID vaccine with other vaccines your child may need for school or camp.



Q. How many doses are required?

A. Like adults, kids will need two doses of the Pfizer vaccine, given about 21 days apart. Remember that it takes time to build immunity after each dose. Your child will be fully vaccinated – and have the maximum protection from the vaccine – two weeks after their second dose.

Q. What will the vaccine cost?

A. Nothing. The COVID vaccine is free to everyone – including kids and teens. You will not be charged, and you do not need insurance to get the vaccine.

Q. How long will protection last?

A. We don't know yet how long the vaccine will protect against COVID. Researchers are continuing to study exactly how long protection from the vaccines lasts, but in general we know that immunity from the vaccines is stronger and more reliable than immunity from natural infection.

Q. Will the vaccine be required?

A. It is unlikely that the state or the federal government will require COVID vaccines in the near future. But private institutions – including private schools and universities, or summer camps – could require that children get vaccinated.

Q. Are there children in this age group who should not get the vaccine?

A. The vaccine is not recommended for children who have a history of severe allergic reactions to ingredients in the vaccine.





Q. Where can parents turn for more information about the vaccine?

A. There is a lot of new information – and sometimes untrue information – about the vaccines, and it can be hard to know who to turn to for advice.

It is best to talk with a healthcare professional, like your doctor, who has the scientific knowledge to answer your questions and who has your family’s best interests in mind. Other sources of reliable information about the vaccines include your local public health department, the CDC, the FDA, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.