

Frequently Asked Questions about Child & Teen COVID-19 Vaccination



What is COVID-19?

(Updated 11/7/21)

COVID-19 is an illness caused by a virus spreading around the world and in our local communities. The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads mainly through droplets produced when an infected person exhales or speaks, and especially when they yell, sing, cough, or sneeze. Droplets can land on or be inhaled by people nearby. People with COVID-19 can have a range of symptoms, from a mild sickness to extreme illness that needs hospital treatment, or worse.

Are children and teens at risk for COVID-19?

Yes. Approximately 6.3 million child COVID-19 cases were reported to the CDC as of October 2021, and COVID-19 has become one of the top 10 causes of pediatric death. Tens of thousands of children and teens have been hospitalized with COVID-19, and a third of kids hospitalized with severe COVID-19 have no known pre-existing conditions. Each person's body reacts differently to the virus. COVID-19 disease can have long-term health consequences, even from mild cases. Although older adults and people with underlying health conditions are at increased risk for severe COVID-19, children and teens can also be severely infected. Most new cases of COVID-19 in WV have been among younger people.

Are children and teens eligible for COVID-19 vaccination in West Virginia?

Yes. Those ages 5-11 years are eligible to get the Pfizer-BioNTech **pediatric** COVID-19 vaccine, given in 2 doses at least 3 weeks apart. Those 12-17 years are eligible for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, and those 18 years of age and older may get the Pfizer, Moderna, or Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines. Children under age 5 are not yet eligible. Minors need guardian consent to treat; forms are available at the vaccination location.

Where can my child/teen get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Many locations have COVID-19 vaccines readily available. Check with your child's healthcare provider, health department, or local pharmacy to see whether they offer COVID-19 pediatric vaccination. West Virginia schools are also offering COVID-19 vaccines to students at school vaccination clinics or school-based health clinics. You can find a COVID-19 vaccine location near you by visiting vaccines.gov. For help finding a COVID-19 community vaccination location, visit vaccinate.wv.gov or call the West Virginia COVID-19 Vaccine Info Line: 1-833-734-0965.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?

Yes. Rigorous clinical trials found COVID-19 vaccination is safe and effective in those ages 5 and older. Clinical trials showed no serious safety concerns. As of October 2021, more than 11 million people under age 18 in the U.S. were fully vaccinated. COVID-19 vaccines have been undergoing the most intensive vaccine safety monitoring in U.S. history. To learn more, visit: <https://bit.ly/CovVaxSafety>

Are the COVID-19 vaccines effective?

Yes. Vaccination is highly effective at preventing severe COVID-19 disease, hospitalizations, and death. From June-Sept. 2021, COVID-19 vaccination reduced the risk of hospitalization among those aged 12-18 in the U.S. by 93%. Similar to adult vaccine trials, vaccination was more than 90% effective in preventing COVID-19 among children aged 5-11 in clinical trials.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines free?

Yes. COVID-19 vaccines are readily available and free of charge for the person getting vaccinated.

Can people get COVID-19 vaccines at the same time as others, like the flu shot?

Yes. It is safe to get a COVID-19 vaccine at and around the same time as other vaccines.



Are there COVID-19 vaccine side effects?

Sometimes. Some children and teens have mild to moderate side effects within the first few days of vaccination, and others don't feel anything at all. Side effects are short-lived and a sign the body is building immunity to fight the virus. Common responses are pain, redness, and swelling at the injection site. Some people also feel tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever, or nausea. In very rare cases, myocarditis/pericarditis (inflammation in and around the heart) have been reported after Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccination of children 12–17 years, and no cases were reported in clinical trials for children 5–11 years. Risk of myocarditis/pericarditis after getting an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine is lower than the risk of myocarditis from getting COVID-19 disease in adolescents and adults.

How do COVID-19 vaccines work?

COVID-19 vaccines work by helping the body's immune system build antibodies to recognize and fight the virus. COVID-19 mRNA vaccines are made of sugar, salts, lipids (fats), and messenger RNA (mRNA). The mRNA is used to make protein, which teaches our cells how to recognize the virus. COVID-19 vaccines cannot affect or interact with our DNA in any way. The mRNA breaks down and goes away quickly, leaving in its place the blueprint for protection.

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe for people who want to become pregnant?

Yes. People who want to become pregnant now or in the future are recommended to get vaccinated. COVID-19 vaccines are safe. People became pregnant during vaccine clinical trials, and many West Virginians have gotten pregnant after vaccination.

Is it possible to get or give COVID-19 to others by getting vaccinated?

No. COVID-19 vaccines cannot infect anyone with the virus that causes COVID-19.

If my child had COVID-19 and recovered, should they get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. Immunity from previously having COVID-19 can wear off and may not protect against variants. Anyone who is unvaccinated is at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 again without protection from vaccination. A study of hospitalized adults with COVID-like symptoms found unvaccinated people with a previous infection were 5x more likely than vaccinated people to have a positive COVID-19 test. Children who currently have COVID-19 may get vaccinated after completing their isolation period.

What is an additional (3rd) dose and should children/teens should get one?

Some children and teens age 12 and older are eligible for an additional dose, and no children ages 5-11 years are eligible for an additional dose at this time. An additional dose of vaccine is recommended when someone is likely not to have a strong immune response after their first two doses of an mRNA vaccine. CDC recommends that people 12 and older who have moderately to severely compromised immune systems get an additional dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine 28 days after a second dose of a Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. Learn more about conditions associated with "moderately to severely compromised immune systems": <https://bit.ly/CDC3rdDose>

Are children/teens eligible for booster shots?

No. Booster shots are not recommended for anybody under age 18 at this time.

Which children/teens age 5 and older should not get a COVID-19 vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccines are not recommended for anyone who has a severe or immediate allergic reaction to anything in the vaccine or who have had an allergic reaction to a 1st dose of the vaccine. More information on vaccine ingredients and contraindications is available at: <https://bit.ly/CDCvaxInfo5-11>

Where can I find more information on COVID-19 vaccination for children/teens?

- **American Academy of Pediatrics - HealthyChildren.Org:** <https://bit.ly/AAPC19ParentInfo>
- **CDC Information for Parents & Caregivers:** <https://bit.ly/CDCvaxInfo5-11>
- **FDA News Release:** <https://bit.ly/FDA5-11>
- **Fact Sheet for Guardians:** <https://www.fda.gov/media/153717/download>

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