



Frequently Asked Questions From Parents/Guardians About COVID-19 and the Vaccines

Vaccine availability

Who can get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Everyone age 5 and older in the United States can get a COVID-19 vaccine.

The vaccines are [free for everyone](#), regardless of your immigration status. You also don't need health insurance.

Where can I or my child get vaccinated?

COVID-19 vaccines are available from many pharmacies and health care providers.

You have three ways to find vaccines near you:

- Go to vaccines.gov
- Text your ZIP code to 438829
- Call 1-800-232-0233

Also check with your child's health care provider or their school. Many schools are providing vaccines to make it easier for students to get vaccinated.

Do I need to give consent before my child can get vaccinated?

Consent laws vary across states and territories. For example, most — but not all — states require vaccine providers to get a parent's or guardian's permission to give a vaccine to a child under age 18.

Check with your [state/territory health department](#) to find out about local parental/guardian consent requirements.

When will children younger than age 5 be able to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Vaccine makers are still collecting data on the safety and effectiveness of their vaccines in children ages 6 months to 4 years.

Once they're done, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has to take its own look at the data. It will then decide on whether to make the vaccines available to children in this age group. This process takes time because the FDA puts safety first and doesn't cut any corners.

If and when the FDA authorizes a COVID-19 vaccine for this age group, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and its expert advisors would also review the benefits and risks before the vaccine becomes available for this age group.

Vaccine safety and effectiveness

Why should my child get vaccinated?

COVID-19 can sicken people of all ages. There's no way to predict how your child might be affected by COVID.

Among children under age 18 in the United States who've gotten COVID-19:

- Tens of thousands have been hospitalized
- Hundreds have died

Even if your child doesn't get very sick, a COVID-19 infection could still cause health problems down the road.

Your child can also spread the virus to someone who is at risk for severe illness — like a grandparent, someone at church, a teacher at school, or anyone in your community.

The vaccines are highly effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death due to COVID-19.

How do we know the vaccines are safe for kids?

The COVID-19 vaccine for children has been through rigorous testing and thorough review by the FDA and CDC.

Thousands of children participated in the clinical trials. Among those who received the vaccine, it was shown to be safe and effective at preventing COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccines are the most closely monitored vaccines in U.S. history. And the FDA and CDC will continue to monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines, including among children.

How do the vaccines work?

The active ingredient is a molecule that leads your body to briefly make a protein (called the spike protein) normally found on the surface of the virus that causes COVID-19. The vaccine helps your body recognize that protein and creates a strong immune response against the spike protein.

After vaccination, your body breaks down the vaccine components and gets rid of them within about 36 hours.

After vaccination, because the immune system has protection built up against the spike protein, the body is ready to fight off the virus that causes COVID-19.

Will I or my child get myocarditis or pericarditis from receiving an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine?

Myocarditis and pericarditis are two kinds of heart inflammation that can cause symptoms like chest pain, a fast or hard heartbeat, and shortness of breath.

These kinds of [heart inflammation after vaccination are extremely rare](#).

When they happen, they mostly happen in male adolescents and young adults, typically within several days after mRNA COVID-19 vaccination.

Patients usually recover quickly and respond well to medications and rest.

You're actually more likely to get heart inflammation if you're unvaccinated and get sick with COVID-19. And heart inflammation from COVID-19 tends to be worse than the heart inflammation people have had after vaccination.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe for people who want to become pregnant, are pregnant, or are breastfeeding?

Yes. Growing evidence confirms that people who are pregnant or were recently pregnant are at higher risk for severe illness if they get COVID-19. There is no evidence that vaccination against COVID-19 leads to complications during [pregnancy](#).

And, there is no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause [fertility](#) problems in women or men.

CDC recommends COVID-19 vaccination as soon as possible for all people who are pregnant, want to become pregnant, or are breastfeeding.

COVID-19 can be a dangerous disease during pregnancy and increases the risk of severe illness in

pregnant moms and preterm birth for the baby. It might increase risks for other problems during pregnancy.

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine can protect you against severe illness from COVID-19 and help keep your baby safe.

Can someone get a COVID-19 vaccine while on their period?

There's no reason to put off getting vaccinated if someone is on their period, according to CDC and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. CDC and the FDA have been closely monitoring safety data and haven't seen any patterns of concern.

Preparing for vaccination

How many vaccine doses does my child need?

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine requires 2 initial doses, given 21 days apart.

Everyone 12 or older should get a booster shot 5 months after your 2nd dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to keep up your protection against COVID-19.

What are common side effects from COVID-19 vaccines?

Children who've gotten a COVID-19 vaccine have the same common side effects as adults.

Common side effects include:

- Pain, redness, or swelling where you got your shot
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Fever
- Nausea

These side effects are normal and typically last for a couple days after vaccination.

They are signs that the vaccine is working and that your child's body is building protection against the virus.

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Yes. You should get your child vaccinated against COVID-19 even if they've already had COVID-19.

Having had COVID-19 doesn't necessarily protect someone against getting infected again.

In fact, a recent [study](#) found that unvaccinated individuals are more than twice as likely to be reinfected with COVID-19 than those who had COVID-19 and then got vaccinated.

How can I prepare my child for their COVID-19 vaccine shots?

Getting a shot can be scary for kids. Here are some [tips to comfort your child](#) before, during, and after their shot.

Before:

- Talk to them honestly about what to expect:
- Shots sometimes pinch or sting a little bit, but only for a short time.
- If you take a deep breath, you can blow out the sting before you can count to five.
- We all need vaccines to keep us safe from germs that might make us sick.
- DON'T give your child pain relievers before vaccination.

During:

- Comfort — don't scold — your child if they cry and avoid using shots as a threat.
- Let your child bring a favorite toy or blanket to hug during the injection.
- You can distract them with a story, video, or conversation.
- Ask the vaccine provider if they have a numbing ointment or spray to apply before the shot.
- Use comforting positions, such as holding your child on your lap. Avoid laying your child down flat. And never pin down your child for medical procedures.

After:

- Hug and praise your child.
- Tell them their body is already making germ fighters to keep them safe and healthy.
- A reward like a sweet treat or sticker can be motivating.
- To help reduce pain and swelling, you can apply a cool, damp cloth on the arm where your child got their shot.

- Ask your child's health care provider if it's OK for them to take their normal pain reliever if they have side effects, such as headache or fever. Most side effects go away on their own within a few days.
- Sign your child up for [v-safe](#), a free and confidential smartphone-based tool you can use to report any side effects your child may have after getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

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