

Concerned About Child Vaccines? What Parents Need to Know



Research gives the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine an A+ for children ages 12 to 15 years old. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved it for that age group.

“The coronavirus has been so deadly,” says [Rikki Baldwin, DO](#), an OB/GYN at [Memorial Hermann Medical Group Cypress Multi-Specialty Clinic](#). “Any glimmer of hope we can get, I strongly encourage parents to look into it.”

Here’s what you need to know about vaccinating your adolescent:

One. Kids can get COVID-19.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has done the math—and it’s worth noting.

Children make up 22.4 percent of new COVID-19 cases, with 71,649 kids contracting it during the week ending April 29.

In the past year, more than 3.78 million children have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Most have recovered, but some children have died.

Two. COVID-19 symptoms in youth are far worse than vaccine side effects.

“We’ve seen millions of cases of people being put in the hospital for COVID-19,” Dr. Baldwin says. “Side effects of the vaccine have been very mild and very temporary for the majority of patients.”

Most likely your child will have soreness or redness at the shot site, and it’ll be gone in a day or two.

In contrast, “Studies show younger populations are among those who have longer term COVID-19 symptoms that are harder to get over,” she says.

Three. The vaccine is safe. The FDA has done its homework—and so has Pfizer.

“Vaccines are rigorously tested for safety, especially COVID-19 vaccinations,” Dr. Baldwin says. “Pfizer has done all their trials, including large-scale ones. The fact the drug maker has taken the necessary steps to ensure safety should give parents peace of mind.”

Whether for the flu, coronavirus or childhood diseases, “vaccinations have been shown to be safe time and time again,” she says. “Do the research and you’ll see COVID-19 vaccines for adolescents are very promising.”

At least two vaccine makers—Pfizer and Moderna—are testing the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in ages 2 and up. By the start of the next school year, even more options may have made the grade.

If you’re concerned, talk with your doctor, Dr. Baldwin advises. “There’s a lot of information and misinformation out there. It’s important to be educated about the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines.”

Four. Research shows the Pfizer vaccine is 100 percent effective for ages 12-15.

“That’s even better than the efficacy among parents, which is around 95 percent,” she says.

Five. Home schooling has flunked for many kids.

Virtual classes have failed for many kids, who have been shown to learn less and miss more.

Being stuck at home also has taken a toll on children’s mental, emotional and physical health, social wellbeing and overall educational experience, Dr. Baldwin says. “Children need to interact with their peers.”

And parents, let’s be honest: Juggling your work while educating your offspring probably has challenged your own success and mental health during the pandemic.

Six. Being fully vaccinated frees families.

Once you, your kids and your parents are fully vaccinated, you can eat in restaurants, visit grandparents or hit the road for a getaway without fear.

Vaccines have their fullest effect 2 weeks after you’ve had both shots of Pfizer or Moderna, or one single dose of Johnson & Johnson.

Seven. Getting your child vaccinated should be easier than it was for you.

With the Pfizer vaccine approved for children ages 12 to 15, the federal government is exploring having shots given by pediatricians, family doctors and primary care physicians, the AAP reports.

“Shots will come from the provider they trust most—easy, fast and free,” President Joe Biden announced earlier this week. “And if teens are on the move this summer, they can get their first shot in one place and their second elsewhere.”

Eight. The bottom line.

“I’d rather you get the vaccine than the virus,” Dr. Baldwin says. “The people who can get vaccinated should get vaccinated.”

The information in this article is accurate as of May 10, 2021.