

What to Expect After Receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine for Younger Children

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Are children eligible for updated COVID-19 vaccines?

Yes, children ages 6 months and older are [currently](#) eligible for an updated COVID-19 vaccine if it has been at least two months since their last shot.¹ There are two COVID-19 vaccine options available for children under 5 from Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech. Novavax's COVID-19 vaccine is only recommended for individuals 12 and older.



How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine for children under 5?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data shows that COVID-19 vaccination continues to protect children under 5 against severe outcomes from COVID-19, including hospitalization and long-term complications.² COVID-19 vaccines are safe, and the CDC recommends that all eligible children remain up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines to protect against circulating variants, including an updated dose for everyone ages 6 months and older.



Do kids under 5 get the same dosage as adults?

No, children under 5 [receive](#) a smaller dose of COVID-19 vaccine than teens and adults that is based on age on the day of vaccination.³



Will the vaccine give my child COVID-19?

No, none of the authorized or approved COVID-19 vaccines contain SARS-CoV-2 virus, so they cannot give you COVID-19.



Why is it important to vaccinate children?

COVID-19 vaccines help protect kids against COVID-19 and prevent them from getting very ill if they do get COVID-19.

- As new variants continue to emerge, it is important to stay up to date with vaccinations to best protect children from COVID-19 infection. While the risk of serious outcomes is lower in children than it is for adults, there have been hundreds of [thousands](#) of COVID-19 infections among children requiring hospitalization as of April 2024.⁴
- While most children who become infected with the COVID-19 virus experience only a mild illness, in some rare instances children have developed a more serious condition called [multisystem inflammatory syndrome](#) (MIS-C). The main risk factor for developing MIS-C is being infected by the virus that causes COVID-19. With treatment, most children get better, but in some cases, symptoms can worsen quickly and be fatal.⁵
- Vaccinating kids against COVID-19 also plays a role in protecting the health of the broader community – every child or adult infected with COVID-19 presents an opportunity for the virus to mutate and variants to develop.
- Widespread [vaccination](#) is important to help prevent both symptomatic and asymptomatic COVID-19 cases and limit the spread of the virus.⁶



Are the vaccines safe?

Yes, all authorized and approved COVID-19 [vaccines](#) are safe, effective, and help protect individuals from potentially serious outcomes from COVID-19, like hospitalization and death.⁷ Millions of people in the United States have safely received COVID-19 vaccines. These vaccines have undergone and will continue to undergo the most intense safety monitoring in U.S. history, including through well-established and new safety monitoring systems designed to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective.



Do I have to pay for my child's COVID-19 vaccine?

No, all private and public insurance plans cover all vaccines recommended by CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), including the COVID-19 vaccine, for children free of cost. CDC's [Vaccines for Children](#) (VFC) program provides vaccines for children who are uninsured or underinsured, as well as American Indian and Alaska Native children. In addition to providing vaccines free of cost for children without insurance, a child may also receive a vaccine through the VFC program if they are covered by Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Children who are uninsured or children who otherwise might not be vaccinated because of inability to pay can access vaccines free of cost by visiting a provider enrolled in the VFC program or through a public health clinic, a federally qualified health center (FQHC), or a rural health clinic.



Do kids experience post-vaccination side effects?

While some may not have any, kids can experience post vaccination [side effects](#) similar to those felt by adults.⁸ These side effects most often include pain, redness, and swelling on the arm where they received the shot. Other side effects can include tiredness, headaches, muscle pain, chills, fever, and nausea.

These side effects are all normal signs that the body is building protection and should go away in a few days.

Side effects from the second shot may be more intense than those experienced after the first shot.

Contact your child's healthcare provider if redness or tenderness at the vaccination site gets worse after 24 hours and / or if side effects are worrying you or do not seem to be lessening after a few days.

The benefits of COVID-19 vaccination far outweigh any potential side effects.

You can use [v-safe](#), a free, smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to provide health check-ins and report any side effects after your child receives a COVID-19 vaccination.⁹ V-safe will also remind you about your child's follow-up dose(s).



Can COVID-19 vaccines affect fertility?

There is no evidence that the COVID-19 vaccine affects fertility or reproductive capabilities in adulthood. The CDC [recommends](#) that people who are trying to get pregnant or might become pregnant in the future stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccines.¹⁰ According to the CDC, COVID-19 vaccines are not associated with fertility problems in women or men.

¹<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/clinical-considerations/interim-considerations-us.html>

²<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/planning/children/6-things-to-know.html>

³<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/safety-of-vaccines.html>

⁴<https://www.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/children-and-covid-19-state-level-data-report/>

⁵<https://www.cdc.gov/mis/about/index.html>

⁶<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccine-what-you-need-to-know>

⁷<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/safety-of-vaccines.html>

⁸<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-safety-children-teens.html>

⁹<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/ensuringsafety/monitoring/v-safe/index.html>

¹⁰<https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/pregnant-or-breastfeeding.html>