

## COVID-19 Vaccines

### Frequently Asked Questions for Parents and Guardians of Children and Adolescents Eligible for the Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine

**Q: Are COVID-19 vaccines available for children or teens?**

**A:** Yes. In the United States, one COVID-19 vaccine has been granted authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in people ages 5 and older – the Pfizer vaccine. Adolescents ages 12 and older are eligible for the adult/adolescent formulation (a 30 microgram dose), while those ages 5-11 are eligible for the smaller pediatric formulation of the same vaccine (a 10 microgram dose). The other available vaccines, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson, are currently authorized for those age 18 and older. The Pfizer vaccine is fully approved and licensed for those ages 16 and up under the brand name Comirnaty.

**Q: Is parental/guardian consent required?**

**A:** Yes. Children under age 18 who are not emancipated must have parental or legal guardian consent for any vaccine. A parent or legal guardian generally should accompany the minor to receive the vaccine, unless the administration of the vaccine occurs in a physician's office, school-based or school-associated clinic setting or similar setting.

**Q: How is the pediatric formulation for those ages 5-11 different from the adult/adolescent formulation for those ages 12 and up?**

**A:** Both formulations use the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which has been fully approved for those ages 16 and up under the name Comirnaty. However, the pediatric formulation is a smaller dose (10 micrograms), one-third of the size of the adult/adolescent vaccine (30 micrograms). According to experts, this lower dose could decrease the risk of any heart-related adverse effects. In the ongoing study for 5- to 11-year-olds, no serious side effects have been detected.

**Q: Are COVID-19 vaccines safe and effective?**

**A:** Yes, COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. According to the FDA, in Pfizer's [vaccine clinical trial](#) for youth ages 12-15, there were zero cases of COVID-19 in the 1,100 children who received the Pfizer vaccine, and 16 cases in the 1,100 children who received a placebo with no vaccine. The trial also found that the youth who were vaccinated had high levels of antibodies in their blood, indicating that they had developed strong protective immunity. The safety of the pediatric formulation was studied in approximately 3,100 children ages 5 through 11 years old who received the vaccine, and no serious side effects have been detected in the ongoing study. The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine pediatric formulation for children ages 5 to 11 years was nearly 91% effective at preventing symptomatic infections during clinical trials, and when the Delta variant was widespread.

**Q: I have heard about myocarditis happening to kids after being vaccinated. Should I be worried?**

**A:** Myocarditis is an inflammation of the heart muscle which can reduce the heart's ability to pump and can cause rapid or abnormal heart rhythms. It is very rare following COVID-19 vaccination in adults and adolescents ages 12 and older. Signs and symptoms of myocarditis include chest pain, fatigue, shortness of breath, and arrhythmias. Well-recognized causes of myocarditis include some common viral illnesses – including COVID-19, bacteria like strep and mycoplasma, and even medications like antibiotics. Myocarditis has been reported as a rare adverse effect in adolescents and adults 12 and older. Most people who experienced myocarditis following vaccination recover from it on their own. Myocarditis and pericarditis (an inflammation of thin layers of tissue surrounding the heart) are much more common if you get COVID-19, and the risks to the heart from COVID-19 infection can be more severe. As of the date of this publication, zero children ages 5 to 11 who participated in the ongoing clinical trial testing of the COVID-19 vaccine experienced myocarditis or pericarditis. No serious side effects have been detected in the ongoing study of those ages 5 to 11.

**Q: How long does it take for the vaccine to work?**

**A:** The Pfizer vaccine is a two-dose series. The second dose is due 21 days (three weeks) after the first dose. Both doses are needed to achieve maximum protection. A person is considered fully immunized two weeks following the second dose. Therefore, you can expect to be protected five weeks after your first dose, assuming you got the second dose on time.

**Q: What are the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines?**

**A:** Not everyone experiences side effects. If any, they tend to be mild and short in duration. The most common side effects include soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site; fever and/or chills; headache; fatigue; and muscle or joint pain. These side effects are normal and a sign that your body is creating an immune response to protect you from COVID-19. Side effects typically last one to two days, and may increase with the second dose.

**Q: Do COVID-19 vaccines cause infertility, or impact a child's future fertility?**

**A:** No. There is currently no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause fertility problems.

**Q: Will COVID-19 vaccines change someone's DNA?**

**A:** No. [COVID-19 vaccines](#) will not alter a person's DNA. The Pfizer vaccine is a messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccine. It provides instructions for the body to create the harmless surface or "spike" protein found in the virus that causes COVID-19; the body responds by building antibodies to destroy the protein.

**Q: Do COVID-19 vaccines implant people with a tracking microchip?**

**A:** No, vaccine injections do not contain tracking microchips.

**Q: How can I make an appointment? Where can youth be vaccinated?**

**A:** There are hundreds of locations at which youth can be vaccinated across the state, including pediatrician's offices, vaccine clinics, local health departments, hospitals, community health centers, pharmacies, and more, listed at [gettheshot.coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://gettheshot.coronavirus.ohio.gov). Many locations offer walk-in appointments.

**Q: Can all children be vaccinated at a pharmacy, or do they have to be a certain age?**

**A:** State law allows those 7 years of age and older to receive a COVID-19 vaccine at a pharmacy. Pharmacists in Ohio may vaccinate children younger than age 7 if the pharmacist has met certain federal requirements as specified in the [PREP Act](#). The Ohio Department of Health is encouraging Ohioans to check with their pharmacy regarding minimum age for vaccination and availability.

**Q: What should my child do before a vaccine appointment?**

**A:** Children should eat and drink plenty of water before getting a vaccination. This is especially important for children and teens because [fainting after any vaccine is more common among adolescents, and often the result of high anxiety or dehydration](#). Children should get plenty of rest the night before an appointment if possible. On the day of the appointment, they should wear a short-sleeve or sleeveless shirt to allow easy access to the upper arm. If it's a colder day, layer with a cardigan or jacket that is easy to remove quickly.

**Q: What should I do if my child is feeling anxious?**

**A:** Parents can take [simple steps to help prepare their child for the vaccination and make the experience less stressful](#). Ask your child to breathe slowly and deeply before the injection and to think about something relaxing. They should avoid looking at the syringe and relax the arm where they will receive the injection. Parents can also calm their children's anxieties by distracting them by talking to them while they are getting the vaccination.

**Q: I've seen a lot of rumors on social media about vaccines. How can I tell what is true?**

**A:** The internet is filled with dangerous misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines, and it can be difficult to know what to trust. The best thing you can do is educate yourself about the vaccines with information from trustworthy sources. Learn more about [finding credible vaccine information in this article from the CDC](#), and separate myths from facts [on this page from the Ohio Department of Health](#).

**Have more questions about COVID-19?**

[Vaccine Facts](#) | [What to know before, during, and after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine](#)

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