



Question

When can children get the COVID-19 vaccine?



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Answer

Vaccines are our best hope to end the COVID-19 pandemic. A vaccine is now available for children age 5 to 12 (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/children-teens.html>). A vaccine has been available for children and adolescents age 12 and up since May 2021. Vaccines for children age 6 months and up may be authorized next. Clinical trials are underway for children age 6 months to under 5 years old.



Research shows these new vaccines are remarkably effective and safe. The American Academy of Pediatrics (<https://www.aap.org/en/pages/covid-19-vaccines-in-children-and-adolescents-policy/>) (AAP) urges eligible children and adults to get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as they can. Being fully vaccinated is especially important now with the rise in cases caused by the delta variant and delta plus variant of the virus. This strain is more contagious, spreading at alarming rates and infecting more children.

Why does my child need the COVID-19 vaccine?



Which vaccine should my child get?

Anyone who is eligible (</English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/My-child-is-about-to-turn-12-Which-COVID-19-vaccine-should-they-get.aspx>) should get whichever vaccine is available to them. COVID-19 vaccines are free (<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/uninsured-patient-covid-services-poster.pdf>), whether or not you have health

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insurance. Right now, the only COVID-19 vaccine available for children in the U.S. is the Pfizer BioNTech mRNA vaccine. Two separate doses are given 21 days apart. The COVID shot for children 5 years to 11 years of age is a lower dose than the dose recommended for people 12 years and older.

What about booster shots?

Some *adolescents and adults* who got two doses of the mRNA (</English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/The-Science-Behind-the-COVID-19-Vaccine-Parent-FAQs.aspx>) COVID vaccines and have weakened immune systems, can get a third dose of vaccine. The additional dose may help them develop as much protection as possible against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The third dose is recommended (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/immuno.html#anchor_1630089738910) for those who meet one of the following criteria:

- are undergoing active cancer treatment (</English/health-issues/conditions/cancer/Pages/Cancer-Therapies.aspx>) for tumors or cancers of the blood
- received an organ transplant and taking medicine to suppress the immune system
- received a stem cell transplant within the last two years or are taking medicine to suppress the immune system
- have hereditary or genetic conditions that cause moderate or severe immunodeficiency
- have advanced or untreated HIV infection
- are taking high-dose corticosteroids or other drugs that may dampen their immune system response

Can my child get the vaccine if they have COVID-19?

If your child has an active COVID-19 infection, they should wait to get vaccinated until they've recovered. They should also follow their recommended isolation period (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>) first. This also applies to children who become infected with COVID-19 between their first and second dose of vaccine.

Are COVID-19 vaccines required for school entry?

Once a vaccine is approved, health authorities, including the CDC and the AAP, recommend when and how children should get it. However, each state's government decides which vaccines are required for school (</English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Return-to-School-During-COVID-19.aspx>) entry.

In the meantime, make sure your children are caught up (</English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Why-is-it-important-for-my-kids-to-get-childhood-immunizations-during-COVID-19.aspx>) on their vaccinations against measles, influenza (</English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/How-is-the-Flu-Different-From-COVID-19.aspx>), whooping cough, and any others that your pediatrician recommends.

What about preschool age children and younger?

Before COVID-19 vaccines become available for children under age 5, clinical trials (</English/health-issues/conditions/treatments/Pages/Clinical-Trials-One-Familys-Experience-During-COVID-19.aspx>) need to be completed. This is to ensure they are safe and effective for these age groups. Children are not little adults; we can't just assume a vaccine will have the same effect on a child as it does for someone older. Once information is available for children 6 months to 5 years old, the AAP will review it and make vaccine recommendations.

One thing is certain: COVID-19 vaccines are preventing severe illness, hospitalization and death for hundreds of millions (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1065481/covid-19-vaccinations-distributed-and-administered-us/>) of U.S. adults and adolescents who've received them already. We look forward to the day when our youngest children can get the vaccines, too, so they can enjoy their communities safely.

More information

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- [COVID-19 Vaccine Checklist for Kids Age and Up \(/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Getting-Your-Child-Ready-for-the-COVID-19-Vaccine.aspx\)](#)
- [Ask the Pediatrician: If my child had COVID-19 already, do they need the vaccine? \(/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/If-my-child-had-COVID-do-they-need-the-vaccine.aspx\)](#)
- [Ask the Pediatrician: What side effects might my child have after a COVID vaccine? \(/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/What-side-effects-might-my-child-have-after-a-COVID-19-vaccine.aspx\)](#)
- [The Science Behind COVID-19 Vaccines \(/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/The-Science-Behind-the-COVID-19-Vaccine-Parent-FAQs.aspx\)](#)
- [Long-Haul COVID in Children and Teens \(/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Long-Haul-COVID-19-in-Children-and-Teens.aspx\)](#) ([/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/When-All-Four-of-Our-Kids-Got-COVID.aspx](#))
- [Children and COVID-19: State-Level Data Report \(https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/children-and-covid-19-state-level-data-report/?_gl=1%2a1a8bku8%2a_ga%2aODI3ODI1MTI1LjE2MjgxNzI1NDk.%2a_ga_FD9D3XZVQQ%2aMTYyOTQ4NjEwMy4zNi4xLjE2Mjk0ODkzOTkuMA..&_ga=2.60292654.285062746.1629139922-827825125.1628172549\)](https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/children-and-covid-19-state-level-data-report/?_gl=1%2a1a8bku8%2a_ga%2aODI3ODI1MTI1LjE2MjgxNzI1NDk.%2a_ga_FD9D3XZVQQ%2aMTYyOTQ4NjEwMy4zNi4xLjE2Mjk0ODkzOTkuMA..&_ga=2.60292654.285062746.1629139922-827825125.1628172549)



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The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.