



## **DELAWARE MODERN PEDIATRICS, P. A.**

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## **COVID-19 Vaccination in Children**

COVID-19 vaccines are available for children. I strongly recommend that children be immunized against COVID-19, just like the adults. These vaccines have been tested extensively; they are safe and effective.

Our office obtains Pfizer vaccines for patients in our practice from the Delaware Division of Public Health. You are welcome to speak to our staff to schedule an appointment.

### **Which vaccines are available?**

For adults and teens over age 12, our office has Pfizer vaccines available for a 2-dose schedule, at least 3 weeks apart. Teens over 12 are given the same shot as adults.

For kids age 5-11, we use a Pfizer vaccine formulated especially for this age. The vaccine given to kids this age contains 10 micrograms of mRNA, compared to 30 mcg in the adult version. It generates a vigorous immune response in kids, with few side effects.

Pfizer vaccine is the only brand authorized for use under age 18, so far. (Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson, are both still testing their vaccines in kids.)

Vaccines for children between 6 months and 4 years old are currently being tested. They may be available as early as this spring.

### **What are the expected side effects?**

Many children have no side effects at all. Some kids feel achy or droopy for a few hours or a day, much as with other standard vaccines. We have not received any calls from our patients describing intolerable side effects.

COVID-19 vaccines do not interact with other standard vaccines, such as flu vaccine. They may safely be given at the same time. Some parents choose to give the COVID-19 vaccine alone, to isolate any side effects; we are happy to arrange any schedule that is convenient.

## **Are “booster” shots available?**

Pfizer booster shots are now authorized and recommended for everyone 16 and older, 6 months after their 2<sup>nd</sup> shot (or 2 months after the Johnson & Johnson single shot). Boosters are not (yet) recommended for kids under 16. For those over 18, any approved brand is ok for your booster, without regard to the brand of your original COVID-19 vaccine series.

## **Why vaccinate children?**

Vaccination dramatically reduces:

- The chance that you will contract COVID-19
- The chance that you can transmit it to someone else, even if you have no symptoms
- The severity of the illness, in the unusual event that you do get sick after vaccination.

This is true in kids, just as with adults. Children are just as likely as adults to contract COVID-19. It is true that kids are less likely to become very sick than an adult, but some do become quite ill. Our practice has seen a handful of kids become hospitalized with serious complications of COVID-19. Fortunately, all have recovered so far with good treatment, but this is not a risk one should take.

Frankly, COVID-19 is a very bad disease. 800,000 Americans have died of COVID-19 since March 2020. More people in the USA have died from COVID-19 over the past 2 years than have ever died of HIV/AIDS.

We are all weary of the social precautions that slow the spread of COVID-19. We want life to return to “normal!” But what will end this pandemic? Not more hand washing, more masking, or more social distancing. And the [rising number of re-infections](#) indicates that “natural immunity” from live COVID-19 infection is unreliable (unlike chicken pox, for example). Herd immunity from vaccinating everyone is the only event that will end this terrible pandemic.

The pandemic will end only when we reach herd immunity. But kids under 18 comprise 25% of our population. If kids are not vaccinated (and if [20% of adults continue to refuse it](#)) then we can never reach herd immunity.

So we have to vaccinate everybody, including the kids – for their safety, and ours.

## **What about myocarditis related to COVID-19 vaccines?**

COVID-19 vaccinations are extremely safe. Almost no permanent complications have been reported from vaccinating children so far.

There are reports of occasional myocarditis after COVID-19 vaccine in teens, especially in boys. But the self-limited myocarditis that is occasionally related to vaccination is much less common, much less severe, and much easier to treat than the heart disease that can result from live COVID-19 infection. Our local pediatric cardiologists and ICU specialists at DuPont Nemours Hospital confirm this observation.

### **Might there be side effects from COVID-19 vaccines that don't show up for a long time?**

None have been reliably reported, and it is highly unlikely that we'll find any. More than 3 billion people are now fully vaccinated; there are no reports of any side effects appearing more than a few weeks after the shots are given.

This is not surprising. Many different vaccines for many illnesses are now available, including all the routine childhood immunizations, flu vaccine, and so on. No side effects of any kind have ever been reported to appear more than a few weeks after any vaccine is administered. We have no reason to think that the COVID-19 vaccines are any less safe in the long term.

“Long COVID” is a different story. Debilitating complications from COVID-19 infection are common. “Long COVID” is less common in children, but it does occur. COVID-19 is a bad disease.

### **Who should NOT get COVID-19 vaccines?**

Essentially, nobody. Some people (apparently including some misguided physicians) think that immune problems, pregnancy, “weak heart”, or other health conditions increase the risk of side effects from the vaccine. In fact, the opposite is true: These conditions make serious complications from live COVID-19 infection more likely. These are exactly the people who most urgently need to be immunized!

We are happy to immunize your children against COVID-19. If your kids are immunized elsewhere (such as at school or a pharmacy), congratulations! Just let us know the dates they were administered, so that we can keep your kids' records up to date.

Please contact us with any questions!

- Dr. Epstein