

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner



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To: Maine Immunization Program Providers
From: Maine Immunization Program
Subject: CDC Recommends COVID-19 Vaccination to 5 through 11-year-olds
Date: November 3, 2021

On November 2, 2021, the U.S. CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended children ages 5 through 11 years receive a Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine. The recommendation now paves the way for 28 million children to receive the vaccine. **Providers can start vaccinating as soon as possible.**

The decision by FDA and CDC to expand and recommend the use of the vaccine among children followed an in-depth review of available safety, immunogenicity, and efficacy data. Safety data was reviewed from about 3,000 children who received the vaccine and found no severe adverse events with reported post-vaccine symptoms, including soreness at the site, headaches, muscle aches and low-grade fevers, which are common in the adult population. Similar to what we saw in the adult clinical trials, vaccination was nearly 91% effective in preventing COVID-19 among children ages 5 through 11 years.

While children are at a lower risk of becoming severely ill with COVID-19 compared to adults, [children can be infected with the virus](#) and there is no way to tell in advance if a child will get a severe or mild case. Some children have developed a rare but serious disease that is linked to COVID-19 called [multisystem inflammatory syndrome \(MIS-C\)](#).

Getting our children vaccinated can help protect them against COVID-19, as well as reduce disruptions to in-person learning and group activities by helping curb community transmission. Widespread vaccination is critical to helping us end this unprecedented pandemic

For more information, please see the list of upcoming activities related to the recommendation, as well as resource webpages that are in the process of being revised and will be available in the days ahead:

- COCA Call – Thursday, November 4th from 2-3pm ET ([Pediatric COVID-19 Vaccines: CDC's Recommendations for COVID-19 Vaccine Primary Series in Children 5–11 years old](#))
- Updated webpage – [COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens](#)
- Updated [interim clinical considerations](#) and MMWR on pediatric recommendations will be available in the coming days.

Please see general Q&A's on the following page.

For additional questions, please call the Maine Immunization Program at 207-287-3746.

Thank you for everything that you have done and are continuing to do to ensure everyone has access to COVID-19 vaccines.

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General Q&A

Q: Are COVID-19 vaccines safe for children in this age group?

A: Based on data from the clinical trial, children may have some [side effects](#) from COVID-19 vaccination, which are normal signs that their body is building protection. These side effects may affect your child's ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days. [Serious side effects are rare](#), but may occur.

Q: Where will vaccines for younger children be available?

A: Finding available COVID-19 vaccines for anyone 5 years and older is convenient. Pharmacies and HRSA sites, including Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), Rural Health Clinics (RHCs), and Community Health Centers are being leveraged to administer COVID-19 vaccine to children who may not seek service in a pediatric practice. FQHCs, pharmacies, public health, and pediatric provider networks can partner with schools, districts, and communities to host pediatric vaccination clinics. These vaccine providers can encourage school-based and extracurricular vaccination for younger school-aged children to hold targeted programs to ensure equity and coverage.

- Later this week and into next week, [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) will list doctor's offices, local pharmacies, healthcare clinics, and local health departments where vaccine is available. This free resource provides accurate and up-to-date information about vaccination services in your area. You can also text your ZIP code to 438829, or call 1-800-232-0233 to find locations near you in the U.S.

Q: How does dosage work for children? What should a parent do if a child turns 12 after they get their first dose of the pediatric vaccine but before the second dose is due?

A: As opposed to many medications, vaccine dosages are based on age and not size or weight. If a child turns from 11 to 12 years of age in between their first and second dose and receives the pediatric Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for their second dose, they do not need to repeat the dose.

Q: Is this Pfizer vaccine the same one that's given to adolescents and adults?

A: The Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine for children ages 5 through 11 has the same active ingredients as the vaccine given to adults and adolescents. However, the vaccine for children comes in a different vial with a different color cap. The Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine that is given to adults and adolescents cannot be used for children ages 5 through 11 years. Children ages 5 through 11 will receive an age-appropriate dose that is one-third of what adolescents and adults receive. Smaller needles, designed specifically for children, are used for children ages 5 through 11 years. COVID-19 vaccine dosage does not vary by patient weight but by age on the day of vaccination. Children are still required to get two doses three weeks apart to be considered fully vaccinated.

Q: Is there a fertility/development concern with vaccinating children before they reach puberty?

A: No. There is no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, can cause female or male fertility problems.

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Q: How will vaccine safety be monitored in this age group?

A: COVID-19 vaccines have undergone – and will continue to undergo – the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history. CDC and FDA will continue to monitor safety using our established and new safety monitoring systems. Parents/caregivers can enroll their child in [v-safe](#), a free and easy-to-use smartphone-based app, where they can complete health check-ins after COVID-19 vaccination and report how their child is feeling after vaccination. Additionally, patients, caregivers, and vaccine providers are also asked to report adverse events after vaccination to the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(VAERS\)](#), even if it is not clear that the vaccine caused the adverse event. CDC reviews all of the information and reports any serious adverse reactions.

Q: Is the federal government worried about myocarditis or pericarditis after vaccination in children?

A: Cases of [myocarditis](#) (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of the outer lining of the heart) have been reported after Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccination of children ages 12–17 years. These reactions are rare; in one study, the risk of myocarditis after the second dose of Pfizer-BioNTech in the week following vaccination was around 54 cases per million doses administered to males ages 12–17 years.

Q: Is it safe to co-administer COVID-19 vaccines with other vaccines, like flu?

A: Yes, if a patient is eligible, both flu and COVID-19 vaccines can be administered at the same visit, as [recommended by CDC and ACIP](#). In addition to flu vaccine, COVID-19 vaccine can be given with other vaccines as well.

Q: Will COVID-19 vaccines for children be free?

A: Yes, COVID-19 vaccines are available for everyone at no cost, including the Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine for children ages 5 through 11 years. COVID-19 vaccines will continue to be given to all eligible people living in the United States, regardless of insurance or immigration status.

Q: Will children younger than 12 receive a vaccine card?

A: Yes, all vaccine recipients, including children ages 5 through 11 years, will receive a CDC vaccination card upon initial vaccination.