FAQs - COVID-19 Vaccine for Children and Adolescents Age 5 and Older

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend that children and adolescents age 5 and older get a COVID-19 vaccine. COVID-19 vaccine benefits people in every age group by preventing severe illness, hospitalizations and saving lives. COVID-19 vaccine keeps children healthy and in school and allows them to safely join in-person activities.

Where can I get my child vaccinated?

The Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department is working with school districts and other partners to hold clinics at local high schools and other locations within the city and county. Parents and guardians can complete the quick and simple registration process and schedule an appointment online at COVID19.lincoln.ne.gov. People who don't have online access or need assistance can call 402-441-4200.

Local pediatric practices are also providing vaccine and so are some local pharmacies.

Why should I vaccinate my child?

Vaccination is the best way to protect children age 5 and older from COVID-19. The surge of the infectious delta variant led to an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in children. Though most children with COVID-19 will have mild or no symptoms, some can get severely ill and require hospitalization. There is no way to tell in advance if a child will get a severe or mild case. Vaccinating children helps keep them healthy and in school, and allows them to safely join in-person activities. Vaccinating children can also help protect other members of the family like younger siblings who are not yet eligible for vaccination or relatives who may be at increased risk of getting very sick if they get COVID-19.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for my child?

The vaccine is safe and effective. Before being authorized for children, scientists and medical experts completed their review of safety and effectiveness data from clinical trials of thousands of children. The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine was rigorously tested and reviewed, and over 11 million adolescents ages 12-17 have already safely received the COVID-19 vaccine.

Vaccinations help prevent many childhood diseases like chickenpox, flu, measles, mumps, polio, and whooping cough. COVID-19 vaccine is another safe and effective vaccine that will help keep children healthy.

How many shots does my child need to be fully vaccinated?

The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is authorized for children and adolescents age 5 and up, as a 2-dose series given 3 weeks apart. The child-sized dose for ages 5 to 11 is a third of the original dose.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

Side effects to the COVID-19 vaccines are typically mild and are gone within a few days. Common side effects include:

- Pain, redness, or swelling where you got your shot
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Fever
- Nausea

These side effects are normal and typically last for a couple days after vaccination. They are signs that the vaccine is working and that your child's body is building protection against the virus.

The risk of a child having a serious adverse reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine is very low. One rare complication that has been linked to the COVID-19 vaccine is myocarditis (inflammation of the heart), and data demonstrate a higher risk for such inflammation among younger males. However, reports of these complications are rare. The risk of developing myocarditis after a COVID-19 infection is much higher than the risk of developing myocarditis after the vaccine. If you have questions about how to protect your children from COVID-19, about the vaccines, or about myocarditis, speak to your health care provider or pediatrician.

How does COVID-19 vaccine work in my child?

COVID-19 vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way. Both mRNA (Pfizer and Moderna) and viral vector (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccines deliver instructions (genetic material) to our cells to start building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19. However, the material never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is kept.

What if my child already had COVID-19?

Children should still get vaccinated against COVID-19 even if they've already had the virus. The vaccine will help protect them from getting COVID-19 again. Plus, getting fully vaccinated will help prevent serious illness or hospitalization if they do get infected again.

Is it safe to get COVID-19 vaccine with other vaccines, like flu?

Both flu and COVID-19 vaccines can be administered at the same visit. In addition to flu vaccine, COVID-19 vaccine can be given with other vaccines as well.

It's perfectly normal to have questions about your child's care. Talk to your pediatrician or family medicine provider to address specific questions.

Additional resources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus
- American Academy of Pediatrics: www.healthychildren.org
- Video - COVID-19 and kids: How mRNA vaccines work - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOIrNIvEiMw&t=16s

Sources: CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics, Public Health Communications Collaborative