

COVID-19 Vaccine and Kids

Children's Memorial Hermann recognizes it can be challenging for parents and families to navigate the overwhelming amount of information available regarding the COVID-19 vaccine and kids. Below, we present frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccine to help you make informed decisions to further protect the health of your children and your family.



How do we know that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective for children?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which is globally respected for its scientific standards of vaccine safety, effectiveness and quality, most recently authorized the emergency use of two COVID-19 vaccines in children ages 6 months and older. The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine has been authorized for the prevention of COVID-19 in children ages 6 months to 4 years old, and the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine has been authorized for the prevention of COVID-19 in children ages 6 months to 5 years old. The FDA evaluated data from approximately 2,970 pediatric study participants for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and approximately 4,700 for the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to ensure that each vaccine is safe for this age group. Additionally, both vaccines have been authorized for children through age 17. Based on this research, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all eligible children receive the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible.



If my child has food allergies, is it safe for them to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. Children with food allergies can safely get the COVID-19 vaccine. Unlike the flu shot, the COVID-19 vaccine does not contain food products such as egg proteins. If your child is allergic to polyethylene glycol (PEG), or has experienced a severe allergic reaction to other injectable treatments, please consult with a doctor.



In general, children have been at low risk from developing serious illness from COVID-19. Why should they get vaccinated?

Keep in mind, low risk is not no risk. While most children with COVID-19 have mild symptoms or have no symptoms at all, severe illness and death have been reported in children under the age of 1 as well as in children with underlying health conditions. Vaccines are helpful in preventing illness and disease, and the COVID-19 vaccine is no different. Getting vaccinated protects children from developing severe complications from COVID-19 and may reduce the chance they could spread the infection to other more vulnerable family members and friends. The effectiveness of the vaccines for children ages 6 months to 4 years—which have most recently received emergency use authorization—has been found to be similar to that in the older age groups.



My child has had COVID-19. Will my child's antibodies be enough to protect them from another infection?

While doctors do not know yet how long we are protected after having COVID-19, they do know it is possible to contract the virus again—and early research is showing that natural immunity may not be as effective as vaccines in protecting against new strains of the virus. The CDC recommends vaccination even for those who were previously infected, especially as more infectious COVID-19 variants develop.



If I have received my COVID-19 vaccine, will that be enough to protect my children from contracting the virus?

Although less likely, it is possible for vaccinated individuals to contract COVID-19 and spread it to others. This combined with more transmissible COVID-19 variants—which account for the majority of current cases in the U.S.—puts children at risk of getting sick with the virus and spreading it to others, particularly while in close contact with other children.

What side effects can my child expect after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?

As with other vaccines, children may feel tired or have a sore arm, low-grade fever and other flu-like symptoms following COVID-19 vaccination. However, these symptoms are typically mild and go away within 48 hours.

Does the COVID-19 vaccine have a long-term impact on fertility?

How can I be sure it won't affect my child's development?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there is no evidence that any vaccine, including the COVID-19 vaccine, impacts development or fertility.

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There have been reports of heart inflammation in young people after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. How should this impact my decision whether to vaccinate my child?

Federal health officials—including those with the American Academy of Pediatrics—have advised that heart inflammation (myocarditis and pericarditis) is an extremely rare side effect of the COVID-19 vaccine. Importantly, for the young people who do experience this side effect, most cases are mild and individuals recover often on their own or with minimal treatment. Myocarditis and pericarditis are much more common in individuals who contract COVID-19, and the risks to the heart from COVID-19 infection can be more severe.



Can the COVID-19 vaccine be administered with other vaccines, such as the flu shot, at the same time?

Yes, according to the CDC, the COVID-19 vaccine may be given simultaneously with other vaccines. Extensive experience with non-COVID-19 vaccines has shown that the ability of a vaccine to create an immune response and potential side effects are generally similar when vaccines are administered simultaneously as when they are administered alone.



How many doses of the COVID-19 vaccine does my child need and when should they get them?

The FDA has authorized a three-dose series of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for children 6 months to 4 years of age. The first two doses should be administered 21 days apart with a third dose administered at least 8 weeks after the second dose. The FDA has also authorized a two-dose series of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for children 6 months to 5 years of age, with the first and second doses given one month apart. For children ages 5 years and older, the FDA has authorized a two-dose series of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, and each dose should be administered 21 days apart. In addition, the FDA has authorized a two-dose series of the Moderna vaccine for children 6 years and older, administered 28 days apart. Eligible children are encouraged to get their first dose as soon as possible.



What is the difference between the COVID-19 vaccine authorized for children ages 6 months to 4, the vaccine for children ages 5 to 11, and the vaccine for children and adults ages 12 and older?

The vaccines may vary in dose amount by age group. For example, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine dose for children ages 6 months to 4 years is one-third the dose authorized for children ages 5-11, and one-tenth of the dose authorized for children ages 12 to 17. The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine dose for children ages 5 years to 11 is one-third of the dose authorized for children ages 12 to 17. Other than the dose amount, there are no other differences between these vaccines, and all are highly effective.



Can my child receive a booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine?

While not currently available for children ages 6 months through 4 years old, the FDA and CDC has granted approval for children ages 5 and older to receive a booster dose of Pfizer/BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine. The booster shot is available for kids who received their second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at least five months ago.

Am I able to get my child vaccinated with Memorial Hermann?

Memorial Hermann is pleased to offer free COVID-19 vaccinations. The COVID-19 vaccine is being offered by appointment only to new and established patients ages 6 months and older at a number of Children's Memorial Hermann Pediatrics locations and Memorial Hermann-affiliated pediatrician practices. Parents should call their pediatrician's office to schedule a COVID-19 vaccination appointment. Please note, minors (individuals 6 months through 17 years of age) will be required to have an adult accompany them to their vaccination appointment.

Children's Memorial Hermann believes in the safety and efficacy of all COVID-19 vaccines currently available and encourages all members of our community 6 months of age and older to receive a vaccination.

To learn more about children and the COVID-19 vaccine, visit [memorialhermann.org/covid-vaccine-children](https://www.memorialhermann.org/covid-vaccine-children).