

COVID-19 vaccines for 12- to 15-year-olds Information for parents

Q: Which vaccine is available for 12- to 15-year-olds?

A: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have authorized the Pfizer vaccine for anyone 12 years of age or older.

Q: How can I be sure the vaccine is safe for my child?

A: While research continues, the vaccine has been tested in several thousand 12- to 15-year-olds and doctors are confident about its safety. In addition, COVID-19 vaccines have been given to more than 200 million adults in the U.S. and proven to be overwhelmingly safe and effective. The Pfizer vaccine now available for younger adolescents is the same as the one given to adults.

Q: Does the vaccine prevent COVID-19 infection and illness in children and adolescents?

A: Early trial results have shown that 12- to 15-year-olds who received two standard doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine developed substantially higher levels of virus-blocking antibodies than did 16- to 25-year-olds in earlier trials. That means that the vaccine appears to be protective at the current dose and it's possible that younger children may get a similar response at a lower dose.

Q: Is the vaccine safe for kids with seasonal and peanut allergies?

A: Medical experts say the vaccine is safe for children with seasonal or peanut allergies. There have been rare reports of severe allergic reactions following the vaccine, which is why your child will be observed for at least 15 minutes after receiving their vaccines. One rare exception is kids who have had a severe allergic reaction to a similar vaccine, but experts at Connecticut Children's Medical Center say that they are few and far between.

Q: How many vaccine doses will my child need?

A: Now, only the Pfizer vaccine is authorized for use in people younger than 18. This vaccine requires two doses, three weeks apart. It is important to get both doses for full protection.

Q: What side effects should I expect in my young adult adolescent?

A: Adolescents had side effects similar to young adults, Pfizer said. The main side effects are a sore arm, fever, chills and feeling tired, especially after the second shot.

Q: Why do children need the vaccine? It's been reported that even if they get COVID-19, the illness is not serious?

A: Children need the vaccine for two important reasons:

1. The number of serious illnesses and even hospitalization among younger people has been rising recently — so, while it's rare, children can get very sick from COVID-19.
2. Even if they do not get sick, children can be infected and spread the disease to adults.

Q: Where can I get a vaccine for my child who is 12 or older?

A: You can walk in to any Hartford HealthCare COVID-19 vaccine clinic that provides Pfizer vaccine. No appointment is needed. **IMPORTANT: Anyone younger than 18 years of age must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.**

Q: How can I find out the hours and clinic locations?

A: Visit our website, www.hartfordhealthcare.org/vaccine for the most up-to-date clinic information.

Q: Can my child be vaccinated at our pediatrician's office?

A: Now, vaccines are available only at vaccine clinics and commercial pharmacies such as CVS and Walgreens. In the future, we expect COVID-19 vaccines will be available in doctors' offices.

Q: How long will protection from the COVID-19 vaccine last?

A: Researchers learn more about the vaccine durability every day. So far, they appear to offer excellent protection against COVID-19 for at least six months and are likely to last even longer. It is possible that everyone will need boosters at some time in the future.

Q: Will children need to continue wearing masks after they are vaccinated?

A: Just as for adults, the risk for COVID-19 infection during public indoor activities is lower for fully vaccinated people. However, precautions should still be taken when a large number of unvaccinated people are present. The CDC recommends that fully vaccinated people should continue to wear a well-fitted mask when engaging in public activities indoors.

Q: How can I protect my children who are younger than 12?

A: Both Pfizer and Moderna are studying vaccine safety and efficacy in children as young as six months old, so it's likely that a vaccine for younger children may be available in the near future. In the meantime, young children will have to continue to wash their hands, wear their masks, maintain physical distance and follow CDC guidance for those who are not vaccinated.