

## Q & A: Kids and COVID-19 Vaccines

Many parents have questions about COVID-19 vaccines, which are now available to anyone age 12 and up. Here are answers to some common questions:

### Q: How do I know COVID-19 vaccine is safe for my child?

**A:** Clinical trials with tens of thousands of participants demonstrated COVID-19 vaccine safety and effectiveness for adults and youth ages 12 and older, and the FDA approved emergency use authorization based on those extensive trials. Millions of people in the U.S. have received COVID-19 vaccines, with intense safety monitoring ongoing.

### Q: When will the COVID-19 vaccine be available for younger children?

**A:** Clinical trials are currently underway for children as young as six months old. We hope to have COVID-19 vaccines available for kids under age 12 in the coming months, perhaps as early as fall 2021.

### Q: Does the COVID-19 vaccine cause myocarditis?

**A:** A small number of adolescents and young adults have developed mild cases of myocarditis, or heart inflammation, after getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Rarely, this has led to hospitalization.

- This appears to be an extremely rare side effect that has affected mostly males after the second dose of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. These cases typically occurred within 4 days after vaccination.
- While the possibility of myocarditis is concerning, it can usually be treated easily with anti-inflammatory medications.
- The risks posed by contracting COVID-19 outweigh the risk of myocarditis, so the CDC and American Academy of Pediatrics continue to recommend COVID-19 vaccine for anyone age 12 and older.
- From the AAP's HealthyChildren.org: "Thousands of children have been hospitalized, and hundreds have died after being infected with COVID-19. Some children who have recovered still experience lingering symptoms. **In fact, getting infected with COVID-19 itself is much *more likely* to cause myocarditis than the vaccine.**"

### Q: Will an mRNA vaccine like Pfizer or Moderna change my child's DNA?

**A:** No, in fact mRNA vaccines don't actually interact with your DNA at all. Once the mRNA has done its job – instructing your immune system to protect you from COVID-19 – your body breaks it down and eliminates it.

### Q: What side effects should we be prepared for?

**A:** Like many vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines can lead to short-term side effects. Some people may have no side effects at all, while others may experience the following:

- Pain, redness, and swelling at the injection site
- Fatigue
- Fever and/or chills
- Nausea
- Headache
- Muscle pain

If your child experiences these side effects, call your pediatric clinic and ask about ways to reduce these symptoms, which usually go away in a day or so. According to the CDC, long term side effects are unlikely.

Rarely, some people have had serious allergic reactions to the COVID-19 vaccine. This is why your child will need to wait in the clinic for 15 to 30 minutes after their vaccination. If your child has a reaction, there are medications to quickly treat it.