Information About the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine: For Parents

This fact sheet contains information about the Pfizer-BioNTech (Pfizer) COVID-19 vaccine that is intended to help you make the most informed decision about getting your children vaccinated to better protect them, their loved ones, and tribal communities, both urban and rural. It’s also always important to consult with your child’s provider before making medical decisions if you have any questions or concerns.

The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine received approval from the FDA on August 23, 2021, for ages 16 and up. The FDA also issued Emergency Use Authorizations (EUAs) for the Pfizer vaccine for youth ages 12 to 15 (August 23, 2021) and youth ages 5 to 11 (October 29, 2021).

Who is the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for?
The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is available for those 5 years and older. However, you should talk with your child’s provider to discuss the risks and benefits before vaccinating if your child:

- has any allergies, especially to other vaccines.
- has had myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) or pericarditis (inflammation of the lining outside the heart).
- has a bleeding disorder or is on a blood thinner.
- is immunocompromised or is taking medication that affects their immune system.
- has a fever.
- is pregnant or breastfeeding.¹

If your child had a severe allergic reaction after a previous dose of the vaccine or if they have had a severe allergic reaction to any of the vaccine ingredients, they should not get the vaccine.

A list of ingredients can be found on the official Pfizer-BioNTech fact sheet.¹

How does the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine work?
The Pfizer vaccine uses mRNA technology to start an immune response that helps our bodies produce antibodies to protect against future infection of COVID-19. mRNA technology has been studied for decades, and Pfizer-BioNTech and other companies used this type of science to assist in creating the current vaccines.²

How is the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine given?
The Pfizer vaccine is given in a series of two doses, given three weeks apart, and injected into the muscle in the upper arm. Plan for your child to return 21 days after receiving the first dose.

Children 12 years and older receive the same vaccine dosage as adults. For children ages 5–11, a lower, age-appropriate dose of the vaccine is administered (one-third of the adult dose). Smaller needles, specifically designed for children, are also used for ages 5–11.³

It is recommended that individuals with moderately to severely compromised immune systems receive an additional dose of the Pfizer vaccine to ensure they have the same amount of protection as those without compromised immune systems. If your child has a compromised immune system, you should speak with their provider to see if an additional dose is recommended for them.

Is the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine safe for my child?
Yes, the COVID-19 vaccines have been thoroughly tested and are safe and effective. During clinical trials, around 2,200 youth ages 12–15 and 3,100 children ages 5–11 participated in testing the vaccine, including a small number of Native youth. Side effects observed in youth who received the vaccine were similar to side effects observed in adult recipients.³ According to CDC, over 106 million people have been fully vaccinated with the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine as of November 4, 2021.⁴

Why should I consider the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for my child? What are the benefits of vaccinating my child?
By choosing to vaccinate our children, we protect them from serious illness and make our communities less vulnerable to infection. The vaccine also protects our children if they do get infected with COVID-19 after vaccination by significantly decreasing their chances of ending up in the hospital or dying from COVID-19.

Those who are fully vaccinated (two weeks after receiving both doses of the vaccine) are able to safely incorporate themselves back into certain daily activities.³
Will my child need a COVID-19 booster shot?

Based on available data, scientists have determined that a booster shot will be needed to maintain protection against COVID-19 over time. The vaccines are working well to prevent severe illness and hospitalization as a result of COVID-19, but a booster dose will help give us increased protection from the virus and new variants that may occur. Many other vaccines also require booster shots, including the flu shot, HPV vaccine and Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis) vaccine.

At this time, booster shots are not yet available for individuals under the age of 18.  

How much does the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine cost?

Nothing, it’s free even without insurance. You should not be required to provide insurance to receive the Pfizer vaccine. However, if you do have insurance, you can bring it with you to your vaccination appointment and the clinic can charge your insurance. This will have no effect on your premium whatsoever.

How should I talk to my child about receiving the vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccines are new, and it’s normal for people to have questions about them, including kids! We encourage you to talk with your child about the vaccine and listen to any questions or concerns they might have. Having safe, honest conversations with our child about their health care is important in helping them to prepare them to make educated medical decisions for themselves in the future.

For resources on how to talk with your child about COVID-19 or the COVID-19 vaccines, you can visit the CDC website or download one of our culturally attuned info sheets like “Talking with Children About COVID-19” at our COVID-19 information page or COVID-19 vaccination page.

Artwork by Bunky Echo-Hawk (Pawnee)

References


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