

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



FDA Approval (for children 12 and older): August 23, 2021¹
Emergency Use Authorization (for children 6m+): June 17, 2022²
Bivalent Vaccine (booster shot) Approval: August 31, 2022.³
Monovalent vaccine (booster shot) Approval: September 11, 2023⁴

Do you have questions about the COVID-19 vaccine for your little ones? We've got answers!

This fact sheet contains information about the Pfizer-BioNTech (Pfizer) COVID-19 vaccine, a medicine that can protect your child AND your loved ones.

Who is the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for?

The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is now available for kids 6 months and older³—with some important exceptions. Please talk with your provider about the risks and benefits if your little one:⁵

- has any allergies, especially to other vaccines
- has had myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) or pericarditis (inflammation of the heart's outer lining)
- has an immune system weakened by a medical condition or medication
- has a fever

Note: If your child had a severe allergic reaction after a previous dose of the vaccine, or to any of the vaccine ingredients, **they should not receive a second dose or booster shot of the vaccine.**

A list of ingredients can be found on the official Pfizer-BioNTech fact sheet.⁵

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 COVID-19 infection. mRNA technology is not new: **scientists had studied it for decades before the pandemic.** Pfizer-BioNTech and other companies used this type of science to create the current vaccines.⁶

How is the vaccine given?

Your provider will inject the vaccine into your child's upper arm muscle. The Pfizer vaccine will be given in two doses, three weeks apart. In other words, 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. However, children ages 6 months to 11 years receive a lower, age-appropriate dose of the vaccine (one-third of the adult dose). For these younger children, your provider will use smaller needles (specifically designed for children) that cause less discomfort.

Children with moderately to severely compromised immune systems may need a third dose, in order to develop the same amount of protection as those with average immune systems. If this applies to your little one, please talk to their provider about how this additional dose is likely to affect your child in particular.⁵

Is the vaccine safe for my child?

Yes. The COVID-19 vaccines have been *thoroughly* tested and are safe and effective. During clinical trials, around 6,100 youth aged 6 months and older participated in testing the vaccine, including a small number of Native children. Side effects the children experienced were similar to those observed in adults.⁷

According to the CDC, over 230 million people have been fully vaccinated with the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines and over 56 million have received a bivalent dose of either one, as of May 11, 2023. Of those, over 1.2 million children 5 years and under have been fully vaccinated and 125,000 have received a bivalent dose.⁸

Why should I consider this vaccine for my child? What are the benefits?

By choosing to vaccinate our children, we protect them from serious illness and make our communities less vulnerable to **COVID-19** infection. **Even if infection occurs,** the vaccine also protects our little ones by **significantly decreasing** their chances of ending up in the hospital or dying from COVID-19.

Two weeks after receiving both doses of the vaccine, these fully vaccinated children can participate in their regular activities. They are better protected against the COVID-19 virus, and by extension so are their loved ones, and their tribal communities.⁷

What are the risks of getting vaccinated?

Common side effects reported after receiving the Pfizer vaccine include:⁵

- pain, swelling, or redness at the injection site
- tenderness and swelling of the lymph nodes in the arm that received the injection
- headache or fatigue
- muscle or joint pain
- chills or fever
- nausea or vomiting.

More children reported side effects after the second dose than the first dose. These symptoms typically go away within a few days. **Call your child's provider if any side effects do not go away.** You can also report any side effects to Pfizer Inc. at 1-800-438-1985.

While severe allergic reactions and Bell's palsy have been reported among adults in clinical trials, these side effects are generally considered rare. Currently, there is not enough information to determine if the vaccine caused them.

The CDC is also keeping track of rare reports of heart inflammation (myocarditis or pericarditis) appearing after mRNA COVID-19 vaccination. **You should seek medical care if your child experiences chest pain, shortness of breath, or a fluttering or pounding heart after vaccination.** Cases have been reported more often after the second dose than after the first, and more commonly in male teens and young adults under age 30, typically within several days following vaccination. Most patients who developed myocarditis or pericarditis after vaccination responded well and felt better after rest and minimal treatment.

If you have other questions or concerns, it's always good to check with your child's provider. You can also visit PfizerBioNTech's website, www.cvdvaccine.com.⁵

Will the vaccine prevent my child from getting COVID-19?

Although the Pfizer vaccine has been shown to prevent COVID-19, it may not protect everyone. **This is true of most vaccines.** It's important to continue all safety measures to help stop the spread of COVID-19, even after you're vaccinated. These may include:⁵

- wearing a mask to protect others who are unvaccinated
- monitoring the distance between you and other individuals
- washing your hands
- following local public health recommendations.

Will my child need a booster shot?

Yes—to maintain protection against COVID-19 over time. The vaccines work well to prevent severe illness and hospitalization due to COVID-19, but a **bivalent** booster dose increases your child's protection from the virus **plus new variants that may occur.**³ Children receive boosters of other vaccines too: the flu shot, HPV vaccine, and Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis) vaccine.⁹

The bivalent Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is now available for teens age 12–18. If your child is in this group and received their second dose at least 2 months ago, they are now eligible to receive a booster shot.

How do I talk to my child about the vaccine?

It's normal for people, including kids, to have questions about the COVID-19 vaccines! We encourage you to talk with your child about the vaccine and listen to any questions or concerns they might have. When we have safe, honest conversations with our children about their health care, we help prepare them to make their own informed medical decisions in the future.

For resources on how to talk with your child about COVID-19 virus or its 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.

References

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