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.

On May 10, 2021, the FDA issued an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for youth ages 12 to 15 years, to protect them against COVID-19. The Pfizer vaccine also received FDA approval on August 23, 2021, for individuals 16 years and older.

Who is the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for?

The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is available for those 12 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 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.

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, over 2,200 youth ages 12-15 participated in testing the vaccine, including a small number of Native youth (0.4%). According to CDC, over 105 million people 12 years of age and older have been fully vaccinated with the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine as of October 25, 2021.[3]

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.

What are the risks of getting vaccinated?

Common side effects that have been reported after receiving the Pfizer vaccine include:

- pain, swelling, or redness at the injection site.
- tenderness and swelling of the lymph nodes in the same arm of the injection.
- headache or fatigue.
- muscle or joint pain.
- chills or fever.
- nausea or vomiting.[1]

These symptoms typically resolve 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 more serious side effects like severe allergic reactions and Bell's palsy have been reported among adults in clinical trials, these side effects are generally considered rare and there is currently not enough information to determine if they were caused by the vaccine.[2]

CDC is also monitoring rare reports of heart inflammation, also known as myocarditis or pericarditis, after mRNA COVID-19 vaccination. Cases have been reported more often after the second dose than after the first dose and have occurred more commonly in male adolescents and young adults under the age of 30, typically within several days following vaccination. You should seek medical care if your child experiences chest pain, shortness of breath, or a fluttering or pounding heart after vaccination. Most patients who developed myocarditis or pericarditis after vaccination responded well and felt better after rest and minimal treatment.[2]

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

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

Although clinical trials indicate that the Pfizer vaccine has been shown to prevent COVID-19, it may not protect everyone.[2] It is important to continue to practice all safety measures to help stop the spread of COVID-19, even after you are vaccinated. Safety measures differ based on state, county, and city and may include:

- wearing a mask to protect others who either do not have the vaccine or are still waiting for theirs.
- watching your distance.
- washing your hands.
- following local public health recommendations.

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.[4]

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 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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