Yale Medicine | Yale NewHaven Health Yale New Haven Children's Hospital

Vaccinating Children Against COVID-19

What you need to know

The omicron variant is causing a surge of hospitalizations in children. The vast majority of these children were not vaccinated against COVID-19. In fact, only 39% of children in Connecticut under age 11 have received at least one dose of the vaccine. Even fewer in New Haven (23%) and Bridgeport (19%).* Yale New Haven Children's Hospital and the Yale School of Medicine Department of Pediatrics wants to remind parents and caregivers that it's important for eligible children ages 5 and up to be vaccinated to prevent hospitalization and protect their younger siblings who are not eligible for vaccination yet. Our pediatric infectious disease experts share facts below about the COVID-19 vaccine, and encourage the vaccination of all children who are eligible.

FACT: More children are getting sick with COVID-19 and require hospitalization than before.

We are currently seeing an all-time high of children hospitalizations due to COVID-19. The omicron variant changed how children are being affected by COVID. Overall, more children are getting sick, and as a result, a higher number end up being hospitalized because they need fluids, oxygen, steroids and antiviral medicine. An additional layer of danger is that any child who has COVID – including those who do not need hospitalization as well as those who do – is at risk to develop multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MISC), which is a serious condition.

FACT: Children should be vaccinated against COVID-19.

All eligible children ages 5 and over should be vaccinated to prevent serious illness, hospitalization and death. All are eligible to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Your child will receive a smaller dose – one-third – compared to the adult dose. This has shown to produce a similar level of protection in children that adults get from the larger dose. Children ages 12 to 17 are now eligible for COVID booster shots. Those 18 years and older can receive either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna mRNA vaccine and qualify for boosters.

FACT: The mRNA from the vaccine disappears rapidly from the body.

According to the Centers of Disease Control (CDC), these vaccines do not affect or interact with the body's DNA in any way. The mRNA material does not enter the nucleus of the cell where our DNA or genetic material lives, so it cannot change anyone's genes.

FACT: The COVID vaccine does not affect fertility.

We already know that many women around the world have had the COVID vaccine and have gone on to have successful pregnancies. Vaccines have been administered over the course of many years, and there has never been evidence that any vaccine, including this one, affects fertility.

FACT: The COVID vaccine trials were very thorough.

The mRNA technology has been studied for over 10 years. All COVID-19 vaccine trials followed safety protocols and were reviewed by the FDA. No shortcuts were taken. Millions of doses have already been safely given and found to have only very rare side effects.

FACT: COVID vaccines do not give a child COVID. No one gets COVID from the vaccine.

The vaccine helps your body's immune system to recognize and fight the virus. COVID vaccination is safe, effective, and recommended for children ages 5 and up.

If you have any questions, speak with your pediatrician. Please note, if your child has had any allergic reactions to ingredients in vaccines in the past, including polyethylene glycol (PEG), speak with your child's pediatrician before getting your child vaccinated.

To learn more about kids and the COVID-19 vaccine, please visit ynhch.org, or use the QR code below.

Source: Connecticut State Department of Public Health, January 20, 2022.