

SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) Vaccination for Children Ages 5-11

(SARS-CoV-2 is the corona virus that causes COVID-19, the disease.)

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated January 18, 2022

EFFICACY

Q: Which vaccine will my child receive?

A: Currently, the only vaccine that is approved for children 5-11 years of age is the Comirnaty (prior name was Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine). The dosage is one-third of the adolescent and adult dose. The pediatric formulation will be in a vial with an orange cap to distinguish it from the adult information.

How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

A: The Comirnaty (prior name was Pfizer-BioNTech) vaccine is called a “messenger RNA” (mRNA) vaccine and does not contain the virus itself. Once injected, your body’s cells receive mRNA and use it as a template to make viral proteins that mimic the same proteins found on the surface of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. These proteins then activate the immune system to produce antibodies. The viral mRNA never enters the human nucleus and therefore never integrates into our genetic material (DNA). This viral mRNA is destroyed by our cells soon after these viral proteins are made. If a vaccinated person is then subsequently exposed to SARS-CoV-2, these antibodies will recognize the same viral proteins and activate immune cells to detect and destroy the virus before it can cause illness.

Q. If my child gets vaccinated, when will they be considered protected, and for how long will they be protected from infection?

A: Full protection is established roughly two weeks after the second COVID-19 vaccination dose. Prior to this time, it is still possible to become infected. Current data suggest greater than 90% efficacy. As with other vaccines, infection despite vaccination is expected to result in milder symptoms and make your child less infectious to others. The duration of protection is not yet entirely clear. Studies have measured antibodies that persist for several months after vaccination. Antibodies are an important part of the immune system, but not the only way that disease is prevented. It is important to continue practicing safety measures including wearing a mask, practicing hand hygiene and socially distancing until herd immunity is achieved. Herd immunity occurs when most of a population is immune to an infectious disease and provides indirect protection to those who may not be immune.

Q. Is the vaccine effective?

A: Similar to what was seen in adult vaccine trials, vaccination was nearly 91% effective in preventing COVID-19 among children ages 5-11 years of age.

Q: Will the vaccine protect my child against other coronaviruses or influenza?

A: No. The Comirnaty (prior name was Pfizer-BioNTech) vaccine is specific to SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) and will not provide protection to other coronaviruses or influenza.

Q: If my child gets vaccinated, can they still transmit SARS-CoV-2?

A: The vaccine prevents against disease. Data on transmission risk to others is still being evaluated. Consequently, transmission may still be possible, despite vaccination. Studies have shown, however, that both asymptomatic and symptomatic transmission in the vaccinated is low.

Q: Can getting a vaccine prevent COVID-19 infection if my child had a recent exposure?

A: Vaccination should not be seen as a means to prevent the development of SARS-CoV-2 infection in a person with a specific known exposure. The average incubation period of SARS-CoV-2 is 4 to 5 days, which is much shorter than what is required by the body to develop antibodies in response to a vaccine, particularly after only one dose. Thus, vaccination is unlikely to be effective in preventing disease following an exposure, and the exposed individual should follow suggested isolation guidelines as appropriate. For more information, please refer to: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html>.

Q. How protective is the vaccine against new variants of SARS-CoV-2?

A. The SARS-CoV-2 virus, as with many viruses, will continue to mutate, with some mutations allowing SARS-CoV-2 to be more easily transmitted and to be more harmful. One such mutation, the Delta variant, is more than two-times as contagious as previous variants and accounted for nearly 98% of all new COVID infections in the U.S. as of August 2021. Fortunately, existing vaccines are effective against the Delta variant as well as other SARS-CoV-2 variants that have been identified. Those who have had COVID-19, but have not been vaccinated may not be protected against circulating variants. This observation makes vaccination even more important. Vaccination continues to be the most effective tool for protection from this and future SARS-CoV-2 variants.

ADMINISTRATION

Q. How many vaccine doses will my child need, and how is the vaccine administered?

A: Children ages 5-11 years of age will be vaccinated with two 10 microgram doses administered 21 days apart. The Comirnaty (prior name was Pfizer-BioNTech) vaccine is an IM (intramuscular) injection. Children who do not receive a second dose within the appropriate time window would not be considered protected.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted full approval for Comirnaty/Pfizer BioNTech's COVID-19 Vaccine for people 16 years of age and older. For children 5 to 15 years of age, the vaccine can be administered under an Emergency Use Authorization. The second dose of the vaccine is given at least 21 days after the first dose.

Does my child need an appointment to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at St. Luke's?

A: Vaccine doses are administered by appointment only at St. Luke's Vaccine Clinic to children ages 5-11 who have pre-registered at lukesvaccine.com. Our clinic is unable to accommodate walk-in requests.

Q. When can my child receive other vaccines, not related to COVID-19?

A: COVID-19 vaccines and other vaccines may now be administered without regard to timing. This includes simultaneous administration of COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines on the same day, as well as co-administration within 14 days. If multiple vaccines are administered at a single visit, receive each injection in a different injection site.

Q. What side effects should I expect from the COVID-19 vaccine, and how long will they last?

A: In the clinical trials, some children had no side effects and, similar to adults, more children had short-term side effects after the second dose of the vaccine compared to after their first dose. Children ages 5-11 years old had short-term side effects less often than older adolescents and adults. Possible short-term side effects are similar to those seen in adults. The most common reactions were pain at the injection site, fatigue and headache.

Q. What if my child turns 12 before receiving the second dose of the vaccine?

A: Some children may be 11 years old when they receive their first dose, and 12 years old when they receive their second dose. Per the CDC, they should receive a dose based on their age on the day of the vaccination. Therefore, some children will receive a pediatric dose for their first vaccine, and an adult dose for their second.

SAFETY

Q. Is the vaccine safe for children?

A: Safety data from the vaccine trials included more than 3,000 children ages 5-11. There were no serious adverse events related to the vaccine. Vaccine safety data will continue to be monitored.

Q. Can my child catch COVID-19 from the vaccine?

A: No. The vaccine does NOT use a live virus and therefore cannot cause COVID-19.

Q. If my child has already been infected with COVID-19, should they still get vaccinated?

A: Yes. It is unclear how long immunity lasts after COVID-19 infection, and it may vary from individual to individual. Vaccination will ensure more consistent immunity across the population. Vaccination also provides protection against variants of SARS-CoV-2.

Q. If my child had COVID-19, how long do they need to wait before being vaccinated?

A: Vaccination should be deferred until the isolation period has ended to avoid exposing healthcare personnel (HCP) or other persons during the vaccination visit.

Q. Are there any contraindications to vaccination?

A: There are no medical conditions, including HIV infection or other immunocompromising conditions that are considered a contraindication to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. Persons who have had a severe allergic reaction to any vaccine or injectable therapy (intramuscular, intravenous or subcutaneous) should not receive the vaccine at this time.

Q. Does the COVID-19 vaccine cause myocarditis?

A: There has been some news about a small number of adolescents and young adults who had mild cases of heart inflammation (myocarditis) after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. The CDC is continuing to monitor any such cases. The latest evidence shows that myocarditis appears to be an extremely rare side effect of the vaccine and the potential risks of COVID-19 infection are much greater.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Q. Where do we need to go to receive my child's vaccine?

A: Your child's vaccine will be administered at the St. Luke's Vaccine Clinic located on the Chesterfield hospital campus in the Institute for Health Education on the second floor (lower-level atrium area) of the North Medical Office Building (222 S. Woods Mill Road). Parking is available in the North/South parking garage or on surface lots adjacent to the medical office building.

Q: Is there a cost to get the vaccine?

A: The vaccine is provided to St. Luke's Hospital free of charge; however, we have been given guidance to bill insurance for the administration of that vaccine for those who have insurance. The administration of the vaccine is covered by all payors with no out-of-pocket due from patients. Therefore, your insurance information will be collected for billing purposes only.

Q. If I lost my child's vaccination card, how do I request a copy of a ShowMeVax immunization record?

A: You may complete an [immunization record request form](#) and submit it to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Bureau of Immunization Assessment and Assurance via fax at 573-526-0238. For questions, you may call the Missouri DHSS at (573) 751-6124.

Q: Where can I get more information?

A: You can stay informed and get updated, evidence-based information from the following the websites:

DHSS Missouri: <https://www.MOStopsCOVID.com> or CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>.