



Vermont Chapter

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American Academy of Pediatrics
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What Families with Children Should Know About COVID-19 Vaccines

We understand that many people have questions about COVID-19 vaccines for their child. Below are answers to common questions parents and caregivers have asked.

1. COVID-19 vaccines teach our bodies how to fight off COVID-19 without making us sick.

COVID-19 vaccines give our bodies a preview of how the COVID-19 virus works so that our immune system can recognize it and fight it off. They do this by teaching our bodies to make disease-specific proteins called antibodies to protect us. COVID-19 vaccines don't give us COVID-19.

While the COVID-19 virus itself is relatively new, scientists have been studying these types of viruses, known as coronaviruses, for decades. All COVID-19 vaccines available in the United States went through clinical trials and were approved for emergency use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. They are recommended by medical and public health experts nationally and here in Vermont.

Millions of people have now been safely vaccinated against COVID-19, including children and teens.

2. Some people may have side effects from the vaccine, but they are usually mild and don't last long.

The vaccine is made to give children enough protection with the least chance of side effects. The vaccine dose for children is less than the dose for people 12 and older.

Some people will have side effects for a short time after getting the shot, while others will not feel any different. Side effects from COVID-19 vaccines are normal signs that your body is building up protection against COVID-19. The most common side effects are: Pain in the arm where the vaccine was given, fever, chills, and tiredness.

3. Not getting a vaccine has its own risks like severe illness, heart problems, and symptoms that don't go away.

Not being vaccinated increases your child's risk of getting sick from COVID-19. Many children will experience only mild illness, but some will get very sick and even need to be hospitalized.

Some people who get sick with COVID-19 can have symptoms that don't go away for a long time (long COVID). The most common lingering symptoms for children include fatigue, headache, trouble sleeping, trouble concentrating, muscle and joint pain, and cough.

The risk of heart inflammation (myocarditis) is greater with COVID-19 infection than with the vaccine. Myocarditis can be a rare side effect associated with the COVID-19 vaccine, but usually resolves on its own without treatment.

A rare but serious condition associated with COVID-19 infection in children causes inflammation (swelling) in their organs called multisystem inflammatory syndrome, or MIS-C. Scientists are still learning about MIS-C and how it affects children.

The best way to protect your child is by helping prevent COVID-19 infection — getting vaccinated, wearing high-quality masks, and avoiding crowded spaces.

4. Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 has benefits.

COVID-19 vaccines can reduce the risk of people spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Getting everyone eligible vaccinated can help the entire family, including siblings who are not eligible for vaccination and family members who may be at risk of getting very sick if they are infected.

Vaccines offer better protection than a previous COVID-19 infection. Unvaccinated people who already had COVID-19 are more likely to get the virus again than those who are fully vaccinated.

When kids in Vermont test positive for COVID-19, it impacts families, child care programs, and schools. Vaccinating children will protect them from serious illness and can help stop the spread of COVID-19 in our communities.

Vaccination also means more freedom, so Vermont kids can be kids. There is less worry around seeing friends and family, traveling, and going to school.

5. You can help your kids feel ready to get their COVID-19 vaccine.

Parents and caregivers can play a big role in helping children feel ready for any vaccine. Talk to them about what to expect when they get the vaccine, and what might happen in the days after. They might feel a little sick for a day or two after getting their vaccine, but it won't last long.

Talk to them about how the vaccine will teach their body to fight off the COVID-19 virus, and that by getting vaccinated they are helping to protect everyone around them.

More information for parents and caregivers:

- Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine (Vermont Department of Health): www.healthvermont.gov/MyVaccine | www.healthvermont.gov/KidsVaccine
- The Science Behind the COVID-19 Vaccine: Parent FAQs (American Academy of Pediatrics): www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/The-Science-Behind-the-COVID-19-Vaccine-Parent-FAQs.aspx