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**George Latimer**
**County Executive**

Department of Health

Sherlita Amler, M.D.
Commissioner

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am writing to share great news with you. The Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Rochelle P. Walensky, M.D., M.P.H., has endorsed the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' (ACIP) recommendation that children 5 to 11 years old be vaccinated against COVID-19 with the Pfizer-BioNTech pediatric vaccine. This endorsement now expands vaccine recommendations to about 28 million children in the United States in this age group and allows providers to begin vaccinating them as soon as possible.

COVID-19 cases in children can result in hospitalizations, deaths, MIS-C (inflammatory syndromes) and long-term complications, such as "long COVID-19," in which symptoms can linger for months. The spread of the Delta variant resulted in a surge of COVID-19 cases in children throughout the summer. During a 6-week period in late June to mid-August, COVID-19 hospitalizations among children and adolescents increased fivefold. Vaccination, along with other preventative measures, can protect children from COVID-19 using the safe and effective vaccines already recommended for use in adolescents and adults in the United States.

Similar to what was seen in adult vaccine trials, vaccination was nearly 91 percent effective in preventing COVID-19 among children aged 5-11 years. In clinical trials, vaccine side effects were mild, self-limiting, and similar to those seen in adults and with other vaccines recommended for children. The most common side effect was a sore arm.

COVID-19 vaccines have undergone – and will continue to undergo – the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history. Vaccinating children will help protect them from getting COVID-19 and therefore reduce their risk of severe disease, hospitalization, and developing long-term COVID-19 complications. Getting your children vaccinated can help protect them against COVID-19, as well as reduce disruptions to in-person learning at school and extracurricular activities by helping curb community transmission.

Before recommending COVID-19 vaccination for children, scientists conducted clinical trials. The FDA gave the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine emergency authorization to use in children ages 5-15 years old and full approval to use in people ages 16 years and older. Learn more about the process of developing, authorizing, and approving COVID-19 vaccines.

The benefits of COVID-19 vaccination outweigh the known and potential risks of COVID-19 infection. Get a COVID-19 vaccine for your children ages five years and older as soon as you can.

Sincerely,
George Latimer
Westchester County Executive

**Frequently Asked Questions**
**COVID-19 Vaccine for Children ages 5 to 11 Years Old**

**Is the COVID-19 Vaccine effective for children?**

CDC now recommends that children between the ages of 5 and 11 years receive the Pfizer-BioNTech pediatric COVID-19 Vaccine. This vaccine is 99% effective in preventing serious illness, hospitalization or death and 91% effective in preventing infection in children.

**I heard people who are vaccinated can still get COVID-19.  Why is that?**

No vaccine is 100 % effective. A very small percentage of people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 can become infected with COVID-19 and may develop a mild "cold like illness" with runny nose or sore throat that goes away in a few days. This is referred to as a "Breakthrough Infection" with COVID-19.

**Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for children age 5-11?**

Yes, U.S. regulators authorized Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for younger children after millions of 12- to 17-year-olds already safely got the shot, the only one available for children in the country. COVID-19 vaccines are being monitored for safety with the most comprehensive and intense safety monitoring program in U.S. history. CDC monitors the safety of all COVID-19 vaccines after the vaccines are authorized or approved for use.

**What are the common side effects following the COVID-19 vaccine?**

On the arm where your child got the shot:

- Pain
- Redness
- Swelling

Throughout the rest of their body:

- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Fever

These side effects may affect your child's ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days. Some people have no side effects and severe allergic reactions are rare. If your child experiences a severe allergic reaction after getting a COVID-19 vaccine, vaccine providers can rapidly provide care and call for emergency medical services, if needed.

**Is it ok to give pain medications like Tylenol or Motrin to my child before getting the COVID-19 Vaccine?**

It is **not recommended** that you give pain relievers or anti-inflammatory medications before vaccination because it may reduce your child's immune response to the vaccine.

**Can my child have pain medication after receiving the vaccine?**

Ask your child's healthcare provider for advice on using a non-aspirin pain reliever and other steps you can take at home after your child gets vaccinated. In general, aspirin is **not recommended** for use in children and adolescents less than 18 years of age. Placing a cool, damp cloth on the injection site can help with discomfort.

**Some children and adults faint after receiving vaccines. What precautions will be taken for my child when they receive the COVID-19 vaccine?**

To prevent fainting and injuries related to fainting, your child should be seated or lying down during vaccination and for 15

minutes after the vaccine is given. After your child's COVID-19 vaccination, you will be asked to stay for 15–30 minutes so your child can be observed in case they have a severe allergic reaction and need immediate treatment.

**How common are allergic reactions to the COVID-19 vaccines ?**
A [severe allergic reaction,](#) like anaphylaxis, may happen after any vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccines, but this is rare.

**What is myocarditis and is this a complication of the COVID-19 vaccines?**
Cases of [myocarditis](#) (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of the outer lining of the heart) have been reported after Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccination of children ages 12–17 years. These reactions are rare; in one study, the risk of myocarditis after the second dose of Pfizer-BioNTech in the week following vaccination was around 54 cases per million doses administered to males ages 12–17 years.

**I have heard that some people got COVID-19 from the Vaccine.  Is that true?**
Your child cannot get COVID-19 from any COVID-19 vaccine, including the Pfizer-BioNTech Vaccine. Learn more about [how mRNA vaccines, like the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines, work](#).

**Is the dose of COVID-19 vaccine for children the same as the dose for adults?**
Children ages 5 years and older are able to get an age-appropriate dose of [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19-19 Vaccine](#). This dose is lower than the standard dose administered to adults and to children 12 yrs. and older.

**My child had COVID-19 in the past. Will my child still benefit from the COVID-19 shot?**
Yes, your child should still receive the COVID-19 shot and will be better protected against future infection. The shot will provide higher levels of protection than that provided by the natural infection your child had. In addition, the Variant strains of COVID-19 which are now present can still cause significant infection in your child and the present COVID-19 vaccines have been shown to work against these variants like "Delta".

**My child has antibodies against COVID-19.  Why does my child need a vaccine?**
Yes, your child should still receive the COVID-19 shot.   The antibody levels which your child will develop from the vaccine are much better at protecting your child against infection.

**I have heard that children do not get seriously ill from COVID-19. Is this true?**
While COVID-19 tends to be milder in children compared with adults, it can make children very sick and lead to hospitalization. In some cases, the complications from infection can lead to death. Although children are at a lower risk of becoming severely ill with COVID-19-19 compared with adults, children can:
- Be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19
- Get very sick from COVID-19
- Have both short and long-term health complications from COVID-19
- Spread COVID-19 to others


Children with [underlying medical conditions](#) are more at risk for severe illness from COVID-19 compared to children without underlying medical conditions. Children who get infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 can also develop serious complications like [multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C)](#)—a condition where different body parts become inflamed, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, or gastrointestinal organs.

**If my child is vaccinated, will he/she still have to be placed on quarantine if exposed to an infected person at school or outside of school?**
If your child has been fully vaccinated for at least 2 weeks and has been exposed to someone with COVID-19, he/she will not be required to be placed on quarantine if they have no symptoms. They will be able to continue in person learning and participating in after school activities such as sports.

**If my child is unvaccinated and exposed to a person with COVID-19 what measures will be taken?**
If an unvaccinated child is exposed to a COVID-19 infected person, they must be placed on quarantine for a minimum of 10 days. They will not be allowed to attend in person classes at school and cannot participate in sports or other activities during the 10-day quarantine period.

**Can my child receive the COVID-19 Vaccine and the Flu vaccine at the same time?**
Your child can get a COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines, including flu vaccine, at the same time.

**Do the COVID-19 vaccines cause infertility?**
There is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines cause fertility problems.

**Does my child receiving the COVID-19 vaccine protect others in my family?**
Yes. Getting your child vaccinated against COVID-19 vaccine can:
- help protect family members, including siblings who are not eligible for vaccination (those under 5 years of age) and family members who may be at increased risk of getting very sick if they are infected.
- help keep your child from getting seriously sick even if they do get COVID-19.
- help keep your child in school and help them safely participate in sports, playdates, and other group activities.

**Why is the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine the only brand available for children ages 5-11 years?**
The FDA has granted Emergency Use Authorization only to the Pfizer-BioNTech Form of the COVID-19 vaccine. The Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) was granted based on data from clinical trials involving thousands of children ages 5-11 years of age. These trials confirmed that the COVID-19 vaccine was effective and safe for use in children 5-11 years.

**Can my child under 5 years of age get a COVID-19 vaccine?**
Currently, COVID-19 vaccines are only approved for use in children 5 years and older at this time. Unvaccinated children ages 2 years and older should wear a mask in public spaces and around people that they don't live with. Learn more about [protecting unvaccinated family members](#).

**How much will it cost to have my child vaccinated against COVID-19?**
The federal government is providing the COVID-19 vaccine free of charge to all people living in the United States, regardless of their immigration or health insurance status.

**Get started with the V-Safe After Vaccination Health Checker**

Get started with **[v-safe](#)**, a free, easy-to-use, and confidential smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to provide personalized health check-ins after your child receives a COVID-19-19 vaccination. Through v-safe, you can report how your child is feeling after getting vaccinated. **V-safe** also reminds you when to get your child's second dose. Learn more about **[v-safe](#)** and share this tool with other parents and caregivers to use after vaccination.