YOUTH VACCINATION AGES 12-15

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

May 2021

Young people aged 12 and old are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, allowing more Californians to be protected from the virus. This Q&A is a guide to fact-based messaging to help answer various questions regarding vaccinations for youth.

Vaccine Distribution and Access

Q: Why should I vaccinate my child if cases are low and children aren't severely impacted by COVID-19?

A: As more adults and teens aged 16 and up become vaccinated, our focus shifts to our younger population, as they remain susceptible.

The American Academy of Pediatrics reports that as of May 2021 youth now account for 22 percent of new COVID-19 cases in the U.S., when this time last year youth cases were only around three percent. Since older people are now vaccinated, it is important to get young people vaccinated to prevent new cases from increasing, starting with our 12 to 15-year-olds.

The more vaccinations get into the arms of those eligible, the more we stop the spread of COVID-19 and shrink the pool of people vulnerable to COVID-19. By getting our 12 to 15-year-olds vaccinated, families can be safer as we venture out more, go on vacations, return to in-person classrooms, play sports, have sleepovers -- and get back to doing the things we love.

Q: Which company is providing the vaccine for my child – Pfizer, Moderna or Johnson & Johnson?

A: After thorough clinical trials, Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine – the same vaccine already safely administered to millions of California adults, as well as over 300,000 16- and 17-year-olds – was authorized by the FDA for youth aged 12 and over on May 10. After safety reviews by the CDC and the Western States Scientific Safety Review group on May 12, it can now be administered to this next age group in California.

Pfizer was the first to submit trial data and Moderna is expected to submit trial data on the 12-15 age group in the coming weeks and months as well. Johnson & Johnson is currently in clinical trials for the 12-17 age group.

Q: Why is the vaccine only for adolescents 12 and over? When do you expect vaccines to be available for younger children?

A: Vaccine trials and approvals commonly begin with older, more vulnerable populations then extend to younger ages. Adolescents were the next group to be prioritized because they are most similar to adults and are more likely than younger kids to spread the virus and become seriously ill. This approach balances the need for safety and speed, while protecting our children throughout vaccine development.

Both Pfizer and Moderna have ongoing clinical trials in people younger than 12. Depending on the outcome of those trials, authorization for this next age group could happen later this year. Johnson & Johnson is currently in clinical trials for the 12-17 age group.

Q: Will my child be required to get vaccinated before returning to in-person schooling?

A: While vaccination isn't currently required to return to in-person learning, the state's public health objective is to get as many of our 2.1 million 12- to 15-year-olds vaccinated over the coming weeks and months prior to the new school year. By getting our young people vaccinated soon, we can have peace of mind in knowing those over age 12 are protected against COVID-19, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Q: How much does the COVID-19 vaccine cost?

A: The COVID-19 vaccine is free for all Californians regardless of insurance and immigration status, which will not be asked. COVID-19 testing, treatment or vaccinations will not affect anyone's immigration status or be shared with immigration agencies.

Q: When and where can I sign up to get my teen vaccinated?

A: Parents and guardians can check vaccine availability and book an appointment through My Turn or call California's COVID-19 Hotline at 1-833-422-4255. You can also call your family doctor, local community health clinic or public health office for more information.

Q: Will there be enough COVID-19 vaccine supply to meet the anticipated demand for 12- to 15-year-olds?

A: California's network of providers has the capacity to administer 6.6 million doses a week, including 2.5 million doses through providers with young patients aged 12 and over. The state is even rolling out new clinics specifically for young people and families. As supply increases, California is ready to meet this new demand.

Q: Can a teen get the second dose at a different location than the first dose? How will you ensure the second dose will get administered?

A: In most cases, a second dose appointment is automatically scheduled when you receive your first. If you want to change your second dose appointment to a more convenient location, make sure to first cancel your original appointment. Then, use My Turn to find a second dose appointment for the same vaccine type as your first. Don't forget to bring your vaccination card with you to your second dose appointment.

Q: What documents do I need to bring to get my teen vaccinated? Is there a consent form and is it for both doses?

A: Young people aged 12 and over will need the consent of a parent or legal guardian in order to be vaccinated. Families should check with their vaccine provider on acceptable forms of consent, including in-person consent, a signed written note, or a phone call with verbal consent.

Q: Should families show up together to get vaccinated?

A: It is important all family members get vaccinated once eligible to help build immunity in our households and communities. State officials are hard at work developing distribution and administration guidelines for the newly eligible age group and how that fits into family vaccination.

Q: Will my teen be required to get vaccinated before they can play recreational or school sports? What about returning to band or theater or rejoining clubs?

A: While vaccination isn't currently required to play sports in public schools, this is the time for our youth to join their teammates and friends in getting vaccinated so they can protect themselves and each other against COVID-19. The California Department of Public Health provides guidance on its website about outdoor and indoor youth and recreational adult sports activities to support a safe environment for these activities. For more information visit cdph.ca.gov.

The resumption of other group activities such as band, theater and clubs will be coordinated by schools in concert with state guidelines under development. Meanwhile, getting our young people vaccinated when they are eligible can help them return to the things they love sooner.

Q: How is California ensuring vaccination equity? Will mobile clinics be able to reach young people and families?

A: California is working closely with local health departments, community partners, school districts and others to provide vaccines equitably to underserved youth, including those who are experiencing homelessness or in foster care. Rural communities and those without access to transportation continue to be a priority for the state as it expands its network to include free rides, at-home services, mobile clinics and more.

Vaccinate ALL 58
Together we can end the pandemic.

Safety and Efficacy

Q: Are the vaccines safe for our youth ages 12 to 15?

A: After clinical trials showed the COVID-19 vaccine is safe and highly effective in protection against severe illness, hospitalization and death in those aged 12 to 15, the FDA granted emergency use of the Pfizer vaccine for this next eligible age group. The Western States Scientific Safety Review workgroup convened immediately upon CDC review of the FDA's authorization, issuing its recommendation just days later. This is the same vaccine already safely administered to millions of California adults, including 30 percent of people aged 16 and 17.

Q: What side effects have you seen in adolescents?

A: Side effects for young people are similar to those experienced by adults which could include a sore arm, fever, fatigue, chills, headache, and nausea. Some experience more symptoms than others while others have none.

As with any other vaccine, medical experts remind us that mild symptoms are normal and are a sign that the body is building immunity and it is important to remember that the vaccines have proven to be safe and effective for all of us.

It is important for those who receive the Pfizer vaccine to return for their second dose in order to gain the full protection the vaccine has to offer.

Q: Were the vaccines thoroughly tested in the 12-15 age group? Where can I see the research or studies about the Pfizer vaccine and youth?

A: Pfizer's phase three clinical trial enrolled 2,260 adolescents 12 to 15 years of age in the United States and demonstrated 100 percent efficacy. The researchers recorded 18 cases of symptomatic coronavirus infection in the placebo group, and none among the children who received the vaccine, indicating that it was highly effective at preventing symptomatic illness. More information on the clinical trials can be found here.

Q: My teen is afraid of getting any vaccine. How do I convince them this is the right thing to do?

A: It is normal for kids to be concerned about any kind of immunization. And there has been more conversation around the COVID-19 vaccine than probably any other vaccination, with an overwhelming amount of misleading information out there.

It's important for young people in this age group to be informed with fact over fiction. Young people are frequently exposed to disinformation on social media, and many need to understand the science behind the vaccine and that it does not contain the virus. They should also know the injection is nearly painless and an important step toward helping end

the pandemic. Getting vaccinated will allow them to get back to the things they love doing, like hanging out with friends and seeing grandma and grandpa.

Q: Do the vaccines have the same effectiveness in youth as in adults?

A: Clinical trials proved the COVID-19 vaccine is safe and 100 percent effective in protecting against severe illness, hospitalization and death in those aged 12-15.

Q: If my teen gets the vaccine, can they still get COVID-19?

A: It's possible, but far less likely. How long the vaccine will provide immunity from the virus is still unknown, but scientists are hard at work studying this. That's why it is important to remember to continue to take safety precautions, including mask wearing and handwashing, even after receiving the vaccine.

Q: My teen has had reactions to other vaccines – should they still get the vaccine?

A: Yes, unless they have had anaphylactic-type reactions to components of the Pfizer vaccine. Allergic reactions to the COVID-19 vaccine are rare and very few people have had severe adverse reactions. If your teen normally has allergic reactions to the flu vaccine or other severe allergies, it's worth discussing with your health care provider or pediatrician before they get their first shot.

Q: When will younger children be able to get the vaccine?

A: Younger age groups probably won't be eligible for the vaccine until late fall or winter at the earliest. Moderna announced in mid-March that it had started testing its vaccine in youth ages 6 months to 11 years. Pfizer and Moderna have ongoing clinical trials in people younger than 12. Depending on the outcome of those trials, authorization for this next age group could happen later this year.

Q: If my teen gets vaccinated, do they still need to wear a mask at school or during sports?

A: Yes, masking requirements will continue in California, especially indoors and in close physical contract with those outside your household. COVID-19 and its highly transmissible variants remain a threat even as we make progress. Scientists continue to study whether the virus can still be spread after vaccination. We can move even closer to the end of the pandemic by following the safety basics and encouraging others in our communities to do the same.

Q: Is there an increased risk to teens who have pre-existing conditions like asthma?

A: No. Youth aged 12 to 15 can still receive the COVID-19 vaccine even if they have underlying health conditions. If you have specific questions about a condition, please talk to your healthcare provider, local community clinic or a public health office.

Q: What if my teen has allergies, is the vaccine safe?

A: Yes, and your child can still get the COVID-19 vaccine if they have allergies to drugs, such as antibiotics, but you need to talk to their healthcare provider first about what types of allergies they have and if any precautions are needed for them to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

Q: Are there any teens who should NOT get vaccinated due to increased risk?

A: If you have specific questions about a medical condition, please talk to your healthcare provider, local community clinic or a public health office.

Q: How long is the vaccine for teens effective? Will they need to get a booster, or get vaccinated every year?

A: How long the vaccine will provide immunity from the virus is still unknown. Scientists are hard at work studying this and to determine if a booster shot will be necessary. It is important to remember to continue to take safety precautions, including mask wearing and hand-washing, even after receiving the vaccine.

Q: Does the 12 to 15 year-old age group get smaller dosages than adults?

A: This Pfizer vaccine dosage will be the same already safely administered to millions of California adults, including 30 percent of 16 and 17-year-olds.

Q: Will having the vaccine protect my teen from Multi-symptom Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) ?

A: Yes, because the vaccine protects people from getting COVID-19, it protects teens and children from getting MIS-C. MIS-C is a disease that happens, rarely, in children and teens who have had a COVID-19 infection. We are still learning more about MIS-C and COVID-19 and the effect on children and youth and scientists are conducting ongoing research.

Q: My teen had COVID-19 and the symptoms were mild. Should they still get vaccinated?

A: Scientists are still studying how long immunity lasts after contracting COVID-19, so it is important that all eligible Californians get vaccinated whether or not they have had the virus previously so we can protect ourselves, our loved ones and everyone around us.

Q: My teen did not contract COVID-19, while the rest of our family had it. Should they still get vaccinated?

A: It's important to remember that while most teens get only mild symptoms, they still face risks. The more vaccinations get into the arms of those eligible, the more we stop the spread of COVID-19 and shrink the pool of people vulnerable to COVID-19. By getting our 12 to 15-year-olds vaccinated, families can be safer as we venture out more, go on vacations, return

to in-person classrooms, play sports, have sleepovers -- and get back to doing the things we love.

Q: How do mRNA vaccines work? Will the vaccine alter my teen's DNA?

A: This mRNA, or messenger RNA, vaccine helps our cells make a "spike protein" that triggers an immune response, providing us protection from this deadly virus. The mRNA is rapidly broken down by our cells after the spike protein is produced. It does not change our DNA, nor does it contain any COVID-19 virus.

The technology utilized to make these vaccines has been developed over the last 20 years. Messenger RNA has been studied for over a decade for effectiveness in influenza, Zika, rabies, and new cancer treatments. This type of vaccine is what Pfizer and Moderna are manufacturing to help us get this public health crisis under control safely and effectively.

Q: Can the COVID-19 vaccine be combined with other vaccines that teens routinely receive?

A: Youth may be able to receive the COVID-19 vaccine along with other routine immunizations in the near future, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics and federal ACIP with the CDC.

Q: Where can I go to learn more about the vaccines?

A: More information on the COVID-19 vaccine is available at VaccinateALL58.com.

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