

GALVESTON COUNTY HEALTH DISTRICT

Protecting and Promoting the Optimal Health and Well-Being of Galveston County

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What vaccine will my teen receive?

- At this time, the Pfizer vaccine is the only vaccine authorized for use in people ages 12 years and older to prevent COVID-19. It is administered in two doses three weeks apart, injected into the arm muscle. Studies show that vaccine recipients achieve immunity about two weeks after receiving the vaccine's second dose. Scientists are still learning about how long that immunity will last.

I have younger children. What is the status of vaccine research in children and adolescents?

- To date, Pfizer and Moderna have enrolled children as young as 6 months in clinical trial studies.

Is the vaccine safe for teens? Are there other risks for teenagers that might not be present for adults?

- The Pfizer vaccine is absolutely safe for children ages 12 years and older.
- In clinical trials, enough teens participated to show that the vaccine is safe for people as young as 12 years. We have no reason to expect that children would tolerate the vaccine less favorably than adults would.

If teens are less likely to get sick from COVID-19, why do they need a vaccine?

- Even though it is rare for children to get seriously ill from COVID-19, children who are 12 years and older have needed hospital care for COVID-19.
- This is especially true for teenagers with underlying health conditions such as weakened immune systems, obesity or chronic lung conditions.
- Having the vaccine may also give parents and teens alike peace of mind to return to more typical activities, like in-person instruction and participating in sports, which is great for mental health.

Are there any teens who should not get the vaccine? Should I talk to my pediatrician before scheduling the appointment?

- There is no category of teenagers who should not get the vaccine, unless they have a known allergy to one of the vaccine's components.
- Because it is not a live vaccine – a vaccine that uses a weakened form of a germ to prompt an immune response – the possibility for reaction is very small.
- Vaccine recipients are monitored for 15 minutes after receiving the injection in case of any allergic reaction.
- Teens with other types of allergies beyond any vaccine component can feel safe receiving the vaccine.

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The Galveston County Health District (GCHD) is the local public health agency for Galveston County, Texas. GCHD provides services and programs that protect the everyday health and well-being of Galveston County.

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Will the COVID-19 vaccine affect my child's fertility?

- Definitely not. Because it is an mRNA vaccine, the vaccine does not get incorporated into or change the DNA of the body's cells in any way.
- There is no reason to worry that the vaccine will affect fertility or future offspring.

The COVID-19 vaccine was developed quickly. Should I be concerned about that?

- No. The vaccine was developed quickly because scientists received additional money and resources to support from the government. This allowed scientists to follow all the typical processes but overlap some steps, which sped up the process.
- Think, have you had the chicken pox or polio? Maybe not, because you more than likely received the vaccine!
- Also, it was easy to find volunteers to participate in clinical trials because many were excited by the possibility of receiving the vaccine.

I've read about COVID-19 variants. Will the vaccine protect my teen against them?

- We are still learning about how effective the vaccine is against variants. While there may be some decrease in immune response, the vaccine is still largely protective.
- An important step in fighting variants is to ensure as many people as possible get the vaccine.

My teenager already had COVID-19. Should they have the vaccine?

- Yes. We do not know how long the immunity lasts from natural illness, and the vaccine is made to create a longer lasting immune response.

Can my child take their normal medications before the COVID-19 vaccine?

- Your child should continue to take their normal medications as prescribed.

Can my child take acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or an antihistamine *before* the COVID-19 vaccine to offset any potential side effects?

- No. It is best to avoid preventatively administering these medications – either before the vaccination or right afterward if no side effects are present – because there is a chance, they can decrease the immune response.

What should my child expect at the COVID-19 vaccination appointment?

- After checking in and taking care of paperwork, the teen will be asked some questions about their health.
- The shot will be administered into the arm.
- After receiving the shot, the teen will be monitored for 15 minutes to ensure no adverse reactions.
- The teen will also receive a card indicating when they received the vaccine and information about the vaccine.

What should I do with their vaccination card?

- Take a picture of it just in case anything happens to it and store in a safe place. There is no need to laminate it.

Do we really need to come back for a second COVID-19 vaccine?

- Yes. Clinical trials that led to the Pfizer vaccine's licensing incorporated two doses.

What are the side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine? Are there any different side effects for kids?

- The most common side effects are fever and feeling achy or tired.
- Any side effects should be relatively short-lived and ease within 24 hours.
- Because teens have more robust immune systems, it is possible that they may feel these side effects more strongly than adults would. This is a sign that their immune system is mounting a response against the virus.

If side effects do appear after the COVID-19 vaccination, what can I use to treat them?

- It is fine to treat side effects once they surface with over-the-counter pain medicine. Either ibuprofen or acetaminophen is fine, so long as the child has not had previous reactions to these medications.

After receiving both COVID-19 vaccine doses, can my child stop wearing a mask?

- No. It is important that they continue to take precautions against COVID-19. Though they are highly effective, the vaccine is not 100 percent effective, and while among a group of people, it is impossible to know who is and who is not vaccinated.

How will the COVID-19 vaccine change socializing for my child?

- Teens and families alike can definitely have more peace of mind about the safety of resuming more typical activities, which will be wonderful for mental health.
- In group activities, teens should still continue to wear masks.
- In one-on-one activities where a teen and their friend are both fully vaccinated, they can feel comfortable removing their masks so long as no one in either household is high-risk and unvaccinated.

Should I be concerned about having my older vaccinated teen around their younger siblings who are not vaccinated?

- No.
- These children were already interacting with each other in the same household before one received the vaccine.
- The entire family can take comfort in knowing that one more person in household who has been vaccinated offers more protection for the whole family.

Reference

Choc. (2021, April 13). *The COVID-19 vaccine and teens: What parents should know*. CHOC Children's Blog. <https://blog.chocchildrens.org/the-covid-19-vaccine-and-teens-what-parents-should-know/>.