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Statement From New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli on CDC Recommendation of Pfizer Vaccine for 5- through 11-Year-Olds

Effective immediately, New Jersey children 5 through 11 years of age are eligible to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. The Department of Health urges everyone ages 5 and older to get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as possible.

Yesterday's recommendation by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to enable the administration of the Pfizer vaccine for children ages 5 through 11 years is an important step forward in ensuring that as many people as possible get vaccinated against COVID-19.

The recommendation follows review by CDC and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advisory panels, as well as the FDA. The pediatric Pfizer vaccine is administered as a two-dose primary series, three weeks apart, and is a lower dose than the dosage for those ages 12 and older. Clinical data examined by FDA has shown that the vaccine is safe and 90.7% effective in preventing COVID-19 in children ages 5 through 11.

As the CDC noted in its statement, COVID-19 vaccines have undergone – and will continue to undergo – the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history.

“Thousands of New Jersey’s children can now benefit from the same protection that older children and adults have benefited from,” said Jeanne Craft, MD, FAAP, president of the New Jersey chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

COVID-19 cases in children can result in hospitalizations, deaths, multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children and long-term complications, according to the CDC. Vaccinating children helps them remain in the classroom and return more safely to sports, clubs, and social activities that are essential to healthy childhood development. Vaccination of children also helps prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

There are approximately 760,000 children in this age group in New Jersey. Protecting them through vaccination helps further protect everyone.

Approximately 203,800 doses of pediatric vaccine have started to arrive in the state. The doses are in the process of being distributed to more than 230 sites including primary care practices, independent and chain pharmacies, county and local sites, federally qualified health centers, acute care hospitals, urgent care and university sites, and the Gloucester County megasite. The state expects ongoing weekly shipments from the federal government.

Department of Health officials spoke with vaccine providers this morning and authorized them to begin the pediatric vaccine immediately.

Parents can discuss any questions they have with their pediatrician, family physician or healthcare provider. The fact sheet for recipients and caregivers is available here: <https://www.fda.gov/media/153717/download>.

To see the CDC statement authorizing pediatric vaccine please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s1102-PediatricCOVID-19Vaccine.html>

To find a vaccination site, visit covid19.nj.gov/finder. Pediatric doses are expected to be listed on the site by Wednesday and the list will get updated as additional sites are added.

The public will be able to search for sites that currently have the pediatric vaccine and can also contact the COVID-19 Vaccine Call Center at 855-568-0545.

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