Five Reasons to Vaccinate

Children ages 5–11 are eligible to receive the two-dose pediatric Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.

Vaccination is one of the best tools to stop the spread of COVID-19 and make sure children can continue the in-person activities that are important for their physical and mental health.

Vaccination is safe and effective.

Hundreds of millions of doses of COVID-19 vaccine have already safely been administered in the United States. The pediatric formulation is a smaller dose for children ages 5–11 that has been proven safe and effective in clinical trials.

Immunization can make a difference in your child's life.

Children can become seriously ill from COVID-19. Vaccination reduces their risk of getting severely sick or hospitalized, or of suffering long COVID or multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C) in children.

Immunization protects others you care about.

Children who are infected with COVID-19 can spread the virus to others, even if they have a mild case or don't experience any symptoms. Vaccinating everyone in your household who is eligible helps protect your whole family, including those who may have compromised immune systems or who are too young to be vaccinated.

Vaccination can save your family time and money.

COVID-19 vaccines are free for everyone. But getting sick with COVID-19 can be costly. A child unable to attend childcare or school because they are sick, experiencing long-term health problems, or needing to quarantine can mean you losing time at work or having increased medical bills.

Vaccination is our best defense.

Just like with other diseases, vaccination is a safer way to build immunity than by getting sick. We have vaccines to thank for preventing over 400 million illnesses and avoiding almost one million deaths for children born between 1994 and 2018.

What to Expect Before, During, and After Vaccination.

Prepare for your child's COVID-19 vaccine appointment and know what to do to support your child.

Before the visit

· Check if your child's school district will be offering a COVID-19 vaccination clinic, check with a local vaccination clinic or at your local pharmacy or doctor's office. Some sites require appointments while others have walk-in hours. Search for pediatric COVID-19 vaccine providers near you at maine.gov/covid19/vaccines.

· Your child may also receive routine shots at the same appointment for the COVID-19 shot. This includes getting an annual flu shot. Ask your health care provider if your child is caught up on all routine immunizations.

· Talk with your child before the appointment. Tell your child what to expect and remind them that vaccines will help keep them healthy.

· Consider bringing their favorite toy to engage and comfort them.

At the clinic

· Ask any questions you may have.

· During vaccination, you can distract and comfort your child with a song, toy, or special blanket.

· If your child is younger, holding them on your lap during the immunization may help.

· After your child receives their first vaccine, schedule their second dose. Make sure that your pediatrician's office has a copy of the card in your child's medical record.

· Keep the paper vaccination card you receive. Take a photo of it or copy it and keep everything in a safe place. For privacy reasons, don't share a photo of the card on social media.

After the visit

· Common side effects include redness or soreness at the injection site, tiredness, and headache. Children may experience fever or chills, though these symptoms are less common than in adolescents and adults. All symptom typically go away in a day or two.

· Ask your child's doctor if you can give your child a pain reliever if they are experiencing common side effects.

· If you see something that concerns you, such as difficulty breathing, call your child's health care provider.

· Remember that your child is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after their second dose. Encourage your child to keep doing their part to protect themselves and others by wearing a mask and following other COVID precautions.

· When your child is fully vaccinated, layering protection may still be important depending on COVID-19 case rates in your community, but you will have added confidence that your child is protected!

For more information and to **find a vaccine provider, visit** maine.gov/covid19/vaccines.