Facts for IHS Clinicians

COVID-19 & ROUTINE VACCINATION FOR INFANTS, CHILDREN, AND TEENS

Vaccines Available for All Children 6 Months and Older

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now **recommends COVID-19 vaccines and the bivalent booster for everyone 6 months and older.**

Bivalent boosters should be offered to patients who have completed their primary vaccination series and had any number of boosters, as long it has been at least 2 months since their last COVID-19 vaccine. These updated, bivalent boosters provide protection against the original COVID-19 virus and the newer variants that are the predominant strains causing infections across the United States.

Children can get the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as other vaccinations, including the flu shot.

If they are behind on routine vaccinations, now is a great time to suggest they catch up!

Ensure that all teens and children in your care stay up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines, as they have the lowest vaccination rates of all age groups. Emerging evidence indicates that people can get added protection by getting vaccinated even after having been infected with the virus that causes COVID-19.

To help parents and caregivers feel more confident getting their children vaccinated, **it is important that you tell parents that you recommend COVID-19 vaccination for all children 6 months and older.** This gives them the best protection against severe COVID-19 disease.

For other routine vaccinations, offer every recommended vaccine to every patient during every encounter, as appropriate. Visit the CDC for information at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp.

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Many parents may have questions about the vaccine, which you can help answer.

My child has already had COVID-19. Do they still need the vaccine?

Yes, even if children have had COVID-19, they should still get vaccinated. You can get some protection from having COVID-19, but you can get added protection by getting vaccinated. Getting their children vaccinated can also provide parents with greater confidence about participating in childcare, school, and other activities.

Is COVID-19 really that serious for children?

COVID-19 can make children of any age very sick. Some children need to be hospitalized and some have died. Just like adults, children also can develop ongoing health problems after getting infected with COVID-19, also known as long COVID. This can affect their physical and mental health and ability to participate in childcare, school, or other activities.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe for all children?

Yes, COVID-19 vaccines are safe for all children 6 months and older, including those with disabilities and underlying medical conditions. Hundreds of millions of COVID vaccine doses already have been given to people in the United States, including over 2 million doses given in American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

Should my child who has a disability or an existing medical condition get the COVID-19 vaccination?

It is especially important to vaccinate children with underlying medical conditions because they are more likely to get severely ill from COVID-19. This includes children with conditions such as lung, heart, or kidney disease; a weakened immune system; cancer; obesity; diabetes; some blood diseases; or conditions of the muscular or central nervous system.

Can my child get COVID-19 from the COVID-19 vaccines?

No, your child cannot get COVID-19 from the COVID-19 vaccine. Because none of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines in the United States contain the live virus that causes COVID-19, the vaccines cannot make you sick with COVID-19.

Will my child need a booster shot?

As with other vaccines, the immune protection from the COVID-19 vaccine can fade over time. Booster shots are recommended for everyone age 6 months and older who has received a COVID-19 vaccine, and updated boosters are recommended for everyone who already has received a booster. The updated booster works against the types of COVID-19 that are causing most of the COVID infections in our communities right now. As time goes on, people might need additional booster shots.

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