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TALKING ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINES

As a school nurse, you play an important role in ensuring your school is protected from vaccine preventable diseases. Frequently changing recommendations and new information about vaccines can make talking about them stressful for families, and they will look to you for information. While research shows that most parents are in favor of vaccinating their children, you may encounter a parent/guardian who is hesitant or skeptical of the COVID-19 vaccines. Here are some tips to help you navigate tricky conversations and effectively communicate about COVID-19 vaccines.

BE PREPARED

Brush up on the most recent scientifically accurate information about COVID-19 vaccines. Also, make sure you are familiar with your school's policies and procedures regarding the COVID-19 vaccines and positive COVID-19 tests. Identify members of the school or division leadership who can support you.

APPROACH WITH EMPATHY

Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic has been a confusing and difficult time for many. It's likely no surprise that parents/guardians might be unsure or nervous to send their children back to school or to get them vaccinated. No matter what context the conversation, approach it with a sense of calm understanding. Your willingness to listen and not judge any questions is an important part in establishing trust between you and a parent/guardian. Remember, everyone can agree on the goal of keeping children in good health.

HAVE CONFIDENCE

Remember you are a licensed medical professional. Your guidance can be essential in forming a parent/guardian's decision to vaccinate. State the evidence-based facts about COVID-19 vaccines with confidence. Share the importance of vaccines in protecting children from potentially life-threatening diseases. Consider sharing your personal experiences with vaccinating yourself and/or loved ones if you feel comfortable doing so.

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Not every conversation will end with a parent/ guardian signing up for a vaccine. Keep the conversation going by connecting them with online resources such as the [CDC vaccination website](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccination) or [Healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINES

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COVID-19 VACCINE FOR MY CHILD?



The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that all eligible children, who do not have contraindications, get a COVID-19 vaccine. The Pfizer-BioNTech or Comirnaty vaccination is the only vaccination approved for children ages 5 to 18.

DOES MY CHILD STILL NEED TO WEAR A MASK IF THEY ARE VACCINATED?



Yes. To protect those who are not yet eligible and those who cannot be vaccinated, and until we have enough adults vaccinated, we need to continue to wear masks regardless of vaccination status.

WHY DOES MY CHILD NEED THE VACCINE IF COVID-19 IS NOT AS DANGEROUS FOR THEM?



Although death among children is lower than for adults, the death rate is still a problem. Children aren't supposed to die at the same rate as adults. If you look at the number of deaths that have been seen in children under 18, COVID-19 ranks in the top 10 causes for 2020.

WHAT IF MY CHILD ALREADY HAD COVID-19?



They should still be vaccinated. Re-infection with COVID-19 is possible and some studies show unvaccinated people are more likely to get COVID-19 again if they have already had it compared to vaccinated people. Getting vaccinated helps to protect someone from getting seriously ill and dying from COVID-19. Vaccination should occur once the person has recovered from the acute illness (if the person had symptoms) and they are no longer in isolation.

ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF THE VACCINE DANGEROUS?



There can be side effects, but the vast majority are very short term and not serious or dangerous. Some people experience pain at the injection site; body aches; headaches or fever, lasting for a day or two. These are signs that the vaccine is working to stimulate the immune system.

PLEASE REFER TO THE HANDOUT FOR MORE ANSWERS/RESPONSES TO FAQs ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINES.

COVID-19 VACCINES

It might feel like every time you open your , you see something different about COVID-19 VACCINES. Those spreading scientifically DISPROVEN medical claims and conspiracies about vaccines have been doing so for YEARS and many of them want you to buy  their supplements and books. DOCTORS do NOT have any ulterior motives when they recommend getting vaccines. Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics wants to make sure you have the BEST information about COVID-19 VACCINES.

HERE'S WHAT WE KNOW...

TESTED FOR SAFETY



COVID-19 vaccines are and continue to be well-tested. Millions of people have received COVID-19 vaccines, and **no long-term side effects** have been observed. Side effects mostly happen within 6 weeks of receiving a vaccine and COVID-19 vaccines have been studied for at least 8 weeks after the final dose. And in studies, children 5-11 years old had short-term side effects less often than older adolescents and adults.

NO CHANGE TO DNA



COVID-19 vaccines do **not** change or interact with deoxyribonucleic acid (aka DNA) in any way. These vaccines deliver instructions (genetic material) to cells to start building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19. This material never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where DNA is kept. The vaccine leaves your body within 72 hours!

CLINICAL TRIALS



Researchers used clinical trials to develop COVID-19 vaccines. This means that some people in the vaccine studies got the vaccine, and some got a placebo (sterile salt water that does not have any vaccine in it). This is how they could find out if the vaccine worked, which didn't take long because COVID-19 is so easily spread.



SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENT

Vaccines are one of the most significant scientific successes in human history! COVID-19 vaccines included.



TIMELINE WASN'T RUSHED

No steps were skipped! Some steps of the vaccine studies occurred at the same time to gather data faster. And Pfizer-BioNTech & Moderna vaccines were created with a scientific method that had already been in progress for years, so they could start development right away! The process moved along without delays because there were more resources available compared to other studies.



GOOD FOR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Think of the COVID-19 vaccine (and other vaccines) as your immune system's personal trainer. These vaccines teach our immune systems to create proteins that fight disease, known as 'antibodies'. When enough people have antibodies against a disease, that's herd immunity!



MYOCARDITIS IS RARE



Myocarditis is an inflammation of the heart muscle (myocardium). It is an extremely rare side effect of the COVID-19 vaccine, and only a very small number of people will experience it after vaccination. For the young people who do, most cases are mild, and individuals recover often on their own or with minimal treatment. Myocarditis is much more common if you get infected with COVID-19.

DOESN'T AFFECT FERTILITY



The COVID-19 vaccine encourages the body to create copies of the spike protein found on the virus's surface. This teaches your immune system to fight the virus that has that specific spike protein on it. Incorrect reports surfaced on social media saying that the spike protein on coronavirus was the same as another spike protein called syncytin-1 that is involved in the growth and attachment of the placenta during pregnancy. It is not the same protein. Women who are pregnant or were recently pregnant are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

REASONS TO GET VACCINATED



COVID-19 vaccines reduce deaths and severe illness. Getting vaccinated helps protect those who cannot be vaccinated, like newborns or people who are allergic to a vaccine.



NO HARMFUL INGREDIENTS

COVID-19 vaccines were **not** developed using fetal tissue and do **not** contain implants, microchips or tracking devices. COVID-19 vaccines do not have any ingredients that can produce an electromagnetic field at the site of your injection. All COVID-19 vaccines are free from metals.



WON'T GIVE YOU COVID-19

The COVID-19 vaccine cannot and will not give you COVID-19. It instructs cells to imitate parts of the virus, which helps the body recognize and fight the virus, if it comes along. The vaccine does not contain the virus.



APPROVED FOR USE

The Pfizer-BioNTech, or Comirnaty, COVID-19 vaccine is *fully approved* by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for people 16+. Pfizer-BioNTech or Comirnaty for younger age groups and the Moderna and Janssen vaccines are authorized for Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), which requires a similar process to FDA approval, but this happens quicker when there is a national public health threat.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINES.

Illinois Chapter

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American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINES FOR 5- TO 11-YEAR-OLDS

A CHILD IS ABOUT TO TURN 12, WHICH VACCINE SHOULD THEY GET?

Pfizer-BioNTech, or Comirnaty, COVID-19 vaccines are age specific. There is a vaccine for 5–11-year-olds and one for 12+, all made by Pfizer-BioNTech. A child should get the vaccine product that is recommended for their age.

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- Here are the doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine, by age:
- 12 through 17 years: 30-microgram COVID-19 vaccine - two separate doses, given 21 days apart.
 - 5 through 11 years: 10-microgram COVID-19 vaccine - two separate doses, given 21 days apart.
 - Under 5 years old: A COVID-19 vaccine is not yet available, and the doses have not been determined.

See the [CDC's interim clinical guidance](#) for more on dosage errors and how to correct them. Children had the same immune response from the smaller dose and *fewer* minor side effects.

WHY IS THE VACCINE DOSAGE NOT BY WEIGHT?



Some medications are given by weight, but vaccines are not because they work differently than other medications. Antibiotics, for example, help your body get rid of germs and to do that, it needs to be the right amount to ensure it's getting to all part of the body to find the problem. Antibiotics are by weight to make sure that happens. Vaccines do work before someone gets sick, so very small dose is all the cells need to learn how to stop germs. The vaccine doesn't need to get all around the body, only to the cells that will learn to respond to the virus.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?



In studies, children 5-11 years old had short-term side effects less often than older adolescents and adults. Short-term side effects may include a headache, fever, a sore arm from the injection, and [others](#), but these symptoms usually go away quickly on their own. A pediatrician can provide suggestions to help a child feel better if needed!

WHEN WILL YOUNGER CHILDREN (THOSE LESS THAN 5) BE ABLE TO BE VACCINATED?



Studies with younger populations (children 6 months through 4 years old) are in progress. One of the best ways to protect younger children from getting sick from COVID-19 is to be vaccinated if you're old enough. Mothers getting vaccinated before or while pregnant or breastfeeding can help protect babies.

RESOURCES

Learn About COVID-19 Vaccines (CDC)

- X COVID-19 Vaccination for Children 5-11: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/planning/children.html>
- X 10.14.21 CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Pediatric Operational Planning Guide includes guidance for states/jurisdictions in planning for the roll out of 5-11 product: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/downloads/Pediatric-Planning-Guide.pdf>
- X 10.14.21 Preliminary Overview of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccines includes information about 5-11: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/downloads/Pfizer-Pediatric-Reference-Planning.pdf>
- X COVID-19 ACIP Vaccine Recommendations: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/vacc-specific/covid-19.html>

Learn About COVID-19 Vaccines (AAP)

- X Updated “Becoming a COVID 19 Vaccinator” video and slides: http://send.mm.aap.org/link.cfm?r=x4Xdn_nm9UarX2yU9F2dJA~~&pe=ZbVVBbn6zB0xo3hbNuwkH9qyi_VP1_ofmVFzY4JEwVOMTb4f2GCA64aBcRI3I7BC8uThX1uhJo16ROTubJiS_g~~&t=CTvLwt9DlniRwXRq-qEChA~~
- X COVID-19 Vaccine Administration: Getting Paid: http://send.mm.aap.org/link.cfm?r=x4Xdn_nm9UarX2yU9F2dJA~~&pe=g0Xui40l8PMYrAqn0Lzumjlu9Fw6vcYtIPT5TFEm-Q-tVH6o9RmzE1vB4aex9d5YYPEth291-i2NXX14euf5g~~&t=CTvLwt9DlniRwXRq-qEChA~~
- X About the COVID-19 Vaccine: Frequently Asked Questions: http://send.mm.aap.org/link.cfm?r=x4Xdn_nm9UarX2yU9F2dJA~~&pe=KscK6f2K3PoyQs2dOwJWjPI4Qcw1bDHhKKZ6QTWESAPdkEcfLuTbdM-oqkxaTJzTpFz5Z_be8wDbqSdJkaVyXg~~&t=CTvLwt9DlniRwXRq-qEChA~~
- X Free PediaLink course: Effective COVID-19 Vaccine Conversations: http://send.mm.aap.org/link.cfm?r=x4Xdn_nm9UarX2yU9F2dJA~~&pe=MyB5RlboGJ67atAXE3EHMFb-s98uV3qwOen-gfsKrAvlQw4zYlo4M0g9wXLoSR4MhWYH6Fbjs4V-JyyNb0hRNg~~&t=CTvLwt9DlniRwXRq-qEChA~~

RESOURCES

For Planning a School-Based Vaccine Clinic:

- X Checklist of Best Practices FOR Vaccination Clinics Held at Satellite, Temporary, or Off-Site Locations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <https://www.izsummitpartners.org/content/uploads/2019/02/off-site-vaccination-clinic-checklist.pdf>
- X COVID-19 Vaccine-Patient Safety Checklist for Vaccination Clinics from the CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/downloads/patient-safety-checklist-508.pdf>
- X COVID-19 Mass Vaccination Guidance for Providers from the Illinois Department of Public Health: <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/vaccines/guidance-for-providers.html>

Caring for Children and Youth With Special Health Care Needs During the COVID-19 Pandemic

- X From the AAP: <https://www.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/caring-for-children-and-youth-with-special-health-care-needs-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

Talking to Children with Autism and Special Populations about COVID-19 Vaccines

- X From the PA Bureau of Supports for Autism and Special Populations: <https://aidinpa.org/resource/covid-19-vaccine-social-stories/>

Social Media Campaign and Additional Resources

- X From ICAAP: <https://illinoisAAP.org/covid19-immunization-campaign/>

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Free COVID-19 vaccines are available to all Illinois residents ages 5+. [Insert school district/school name] wants to see your child in person, in school, and doing all the activities that make them happy (sports, hanging out with friends, family gatherings, etc.). We care about the health of our students, families, and staff. For this reason, we hope that you will consider getting yourself and your children vaccinated against COVID-19 if you have not done so already.

To find free COVID-19 vaccines near you:

- Go to [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) (note children ages 5 to 18 can get the Pfizer-BioNTech or Comirnaty COVID-19 vaccine only)
- Text your ZIP code to 438829
- Call 1-800-232-0233

Students under the age of 18 must have parental/guardian consent to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. In most places, this means that a parent/guardian must be at the vaccine appointments.

COVID-19 vaccines are safe and well-tested. You can always visit [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) for more information or contact [Insert school district/school name] at [Insert phone number] or the [Insert local health department] at [Insert phone number].

Thank you,

[Insert name]