

Parents: 12-15 year-olds are now eligible to be vaccinated against COVID-19



The Pfizer vaccine is authorized for ages 12+, and both Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines are authorized for ages 18+. This provides the opportunity to further protect children from COVID-19. As a parent, it's understandable to have questions about whether vaccination is the right choice for your child. It is important to learn about COVID vaccines to make an informed decision.



Why vaccinate your child?

- While most infected children usually experience minimal symptoms, some can develop severe illness. Much is still being learned about "long covid" where symptoms persist in patients previously diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Asymptomatic infections can still spread the virus through schools and sports teams, affecting not only other children, but also at-risk adults.
- Vaccinated people who have been exposed to the virus do not need to quarantine or be tested unless they have symptoms or live in a group setting (like a group home).
- Vaccination gets our kids back to the programs, activities and social interactions they need for appropriate academic, social-emotional and physical development. There is a light at the end of the tunnel, and vaccination helps get us there faster.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

Yes. The FDA authorized COVID-19 vaccines have gone through clinical trials and scientific review just like any other vaccine — including those your teenager has likely already received — and no standards of quality or safety were sacrificed.

Does the COVID-19 vaccine have long-term side effects?

Short-term side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine are usually mild and can go away within 1-2 days. These include fatigue, headache and muscle ache. The currently available mRNA vaccines have had no cases of long-term side effects after hundreds of millions of doses given. Vaccines don't stay in your body, unlike the virus that causes COVID-19, which can have long-term health impacts.

Can mRNA vaccines change an individual's DNA?

No. Messenger RNA is active in a cell's cytoplasm and never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is kept. The mRNA quickly disintegrates after it enters the cell, and no part of the vaccine remains in the body.

Can the COVID-19 vaccine cause infertility?

There is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines cause infertility.

How do we make an appointment?

Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 in Alaska is easier than ever – many locations offer walk-ins and do not need appointments. Visit <http://covidvax.alaska.gov> or call the State Vaccine Helpline at 907-646-3322 for assistance. Check with your pediatrician, school nurse, or primary health care provider to see if they offer the vaccine.

We encourage you to talk to your child's health care provider to discuss individual risks and benefits and determine whether your child should receive the vaccine.