

American Academy of Pediatrics Calls for Children and Teens Age 12 and Up to Get the COVID-19 Vaccine

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For release May 12, 2021

Itasca, Ill.— In a new policy statement published today, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends vaccinating all children ages 12 and older who are eligible for the federally authorized COVID-19 vaccine.

The AAP policy statement comes amid a discussion by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for adolescents 12 years and older, including a review of the data provided by clinical trials. Earlier this week, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration granted an Emergency Use Authorization for use of the vaccine in the 12- to 15-year age group. Both steps were part of a long-standing, rigorous and transparent process that leads to the development of all vaccines.

“This is truly an exciting development that allows us to protect a large population of children and help them regain their lives after a really rough year,” said AAP President Lee Savio Beers, MD, FAAP. “As a pediatrician and a parent, I have looked forward to getting my own children and patients vaccinated, and I am thrilled that those ages 12 and older can now be protected. The data continue to show that this vaccine is safe and effective. I urge all parents to call their pediatrician to learn more about how to get their children and teens vaccinated.”

The AAP recommends that all eligible children, teens, family and household members be vaccinated as soon as possible. Pediatricians are especially concerned about communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and are working to ensure equity in the vaccine’s distribution.

More than 3.8 million children have been infected with this virus since the beginning of the pandemic, and children have suffered in many other ways. While most children do not get severely ill from COVID-19, thousands have been hospitalized and hundreds have died.

“We’ve seen the harm done to children’s mental and emotional health as they’ve missed out on so many experiences during the pandemic,” Dr. Beers said. “Vaccinating children will protect them and allow them to fully engage in all of the activities—school, sports, socializing with friends and family— that are so important to their health and development.”

The AAP supports giving other childhood and adolescent immunizations at the same time as COVID-19 vaccines, particularly for children and teens who are behind on their immunizations. Between the substantial data collected on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines, and the extensive experience with non-COVID-19 vaccines which shows the immune response and side effects are generally similar when vaccines are given together as when they are administered alone, the benefits of co-administration and timely catch up on vaccinations outweigh any theoretical risk. AAP recommends that children and adolescents catch up on all vaccinations that may have been delayed during the pandemic.

Some pediatricians are administering COVID-19 vaccines within their practice, while others are coordinating with public health departments and other places to make sure their patients have access to the vaccine.

“Be sure to let your pediatrician know if your child is vaccinated somewhere other than the doctor’s office so the medical record can be updated,” Dr. Beers said. “Pediatricians are one of the most trusted sources of medical information for children, and we counsel families in our practices every single day. If you have any questions about the vaccine, please call us. We are here to help families navigate this new normal as safely as possible.”

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The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For more information, visit www.aap.org.