The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) all recommend COVID-19 vaccination of adolescents. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted emergency use authorization (EUA) for three COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S.: Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson (Janssen Pharmaceuticals). Pfizer’s 2-dose mRNA vaccine is currently the only COVID-19 vaccine available for ages 12 – 17.

The information presented in this handout is meant to help parents and guardians make an informed decision about COVID-19 vaccination for adolescents.

COVID-19 Illness in Children

- While most children with COVID-19 have mild symptoms or have no symptoms, some children become severely ill from COVID-19. They might require hospitalization, intensive care, or a ventilator to help them breathe.
  - As of May 10th, 2021, North Dakota has reported 20 hospitalizations in children ages 12 – 17.
  - North Dakota’s hospitalization rate in this age group is 2.8 per 1,000 cases.

- COVID-19 has also been linked to a rare but serious health condition called multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C). Children who develop MIS-C have inflammation in their bodies and problems with many organs such as the intestines, heart, brain, lungs, skin, and kidneys. These children may face ongoing health issues due to heart or other organ damage.
  - To date, there have been 8 cases of MIS-C reported in North Dakota.
  - 3,742 cases of MIS-C have been reported in the United States.

- In rare cases, children who get COVID-19 might die. Children with underlying health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, or obesity, may be more likely to develop severe illness.
  - 127 deaths in children ages 12 – 17 have been reported in the United States.
  - North Dakota has reported one death in this age group.

- A joint status report by the AAP and the Children’s Hospital Association indicates that children younger than 19 now account for 20.6% of all new COVID-19 cases as of April 2021, up from 2.6% in April of 2020.
  - In North Dakota, 13% of children 12 to 17 years old have tested positive for COVID-19.

05/13/2021
North Dakota cases in children 12 to 17 years old increased by 38% from March-April 2021.

78% of confirmed cases in children 12 to 17 years old were symptomatic, with the most common symptoms reported as headache (59%), sore throat (52%), and cough (51%).

There is a lack of data available regarding the long-term impact COVID-19 has on children. However, emerging research tells us that some children who get COVID-19 suffer long-lasting symptoms.

A recent study out of the United Kingdom found that children can have prolonged symptoms of COVID-19, including fatigue, headache, muscle/joint pain, rashes, heart palpitations and mental health issues such as lack of concentration and short-term memory problems. A survey of the parents of 510 children with persistent COVID-19 revealed that children had persistent covid for an average of 8.2 months. Only 10% of the children included in the study returned to previous levels of physical activity.

Another recent article out of Italy found that more than half of pediatric patients previously diagnosed with COVID-19 reported at least one symptom 120 days after having COVID-19, and 42.6% reported being impaired by these symptoms during daily activities.

**Reasons to Vaccinate Children & Adolescents**

- COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective and provide protection from COVID-19 infection, hospitalization, and death. Vaccines are the single best way to protect your child and prevent serious illness or even death due to COVID-19 disease.

- Fully vaccinated adolescents with no symptoms do not need to quarantine or be tested following exposure to COVID-19, as their risk of infection is low – meaning they can attend school and stay in activities.

- Vaccinating everyone helps us reach community immunity so we can continue to enjoy the activities that we love. The ongoing pandemic has impacted children. It is important to children's development that they can return to the routines and activities that support their growth.

- Most children have a grandparent or other person in their lives who are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19. Vaccination of adolescents will prevent them from passing COVID-19 to loved ones and other vulnerable people in the community.

- Teenagers play a major role in community spread. Teenagers congregate with one another in school, engage in athletic and social activities with peers, participate in religious services, and have after-school employment or volunteer work that brings them...
into contact with the community. In North Dakota, 41% of COVID-19 cases in children 12 to 17 years old were due to community spread, while 36% were due to household spread.

**COVID-19 Vaccines**

**How do the COVID-19 vaccines work?**

The COVID-19 vaccines work similarly to other vaccines. The vaccine stops the virus by helping the immune system make special proteins called antibodies to fight the virus. The COVID-19 vaccines are not live virus vaccines and do not alter human DNA.

**Are there side effects?**

Some people have mild or moderate side effects after getting vaccinated. The most common side effects reported after COVID-19 vaccination include pain, swelling, or redness where the shot was given, mild fever, headache, muscle pain and joint aches. Side effects are more common after the second dose for the 2-dose series. Side effects are a sign that your immune system is working.

**Can my child receive the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as other vaccines?**

Yes. COVID-19 and other vaccines can be administered at the same time. It is recommended that adolescents receive other important vaccines, including those that protect against whooping cough, tetanus, diphtheria, cancer-causing human papillomavirus (HPV) and meningitis. Certain vaccines are required for 7th, 11th, and 12th grades as well as entry to college. Schedule an appointment TODAY for COVID-19 and adolescent vaccines. This is especially important if your child got behind on immunizations during the pandemic.

More than 20% of North Dakota children ages 16-18 have already received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

**Some highlights from Pfizer’s phase 3 adolescent COVID-19 vaccine trial:**

- The trial included 2,260 children ages 12-15 years old in the U.S., about half of whom received the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.
- There were 18 cases of COVID-19 in the placebo (unvaccinated) group and none in the vaccinated group (100% efficacy).
- No hospitalizations due to COVID-19 or cases of MIS-C were reported by any trial participant.
- There were no severe adverse events in adolescents who received the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine during phase 3 clinical trials.
- Fewer side effects were seen in the 12-15 age group than the 16 – 25 year group.
  - Fevers were observed more frequently in the vaccinated 12- to 15-year-olds, about 20%, compared to 17% in the 16- to 25-year-olds.

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**Who Recommends COVID-19 Vaccine for Children?**

- Likely your child's healthcare provider. More than 60 pediatricians and other healthcare providers in N.D. signed a letter supporting the vaccination of children. Talk to your child's healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.
- **American Academy of Pediatrics** – The AAP recommends COVID-19 vaccination for all children and adolescents 12 years of age and older who do not have contraindications to using a COVID-19 vaccine authorized for use for their age.
- **Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices**

**Where to Get Vaccinated**

Health care providers, local public health, pharmacies, ND DoH pop-up clinics, etc.

[Vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) is live! This is a federally supported website that the President announced to make it easier for individuals to access COVID-19 vaccines. [Vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov), available in English and Spanish, helps connect Americans with locations offering vaccines near them.

In addition to the website, people in the U.S. can also utilize a text messaging service, available in both English and Spanish. People can text their ZIP code to 438829 (GETVAX) and 822862 (VACUNA) to find three locations nearby that have vaccines available.

**Additional Information**

Visit [www.health.nd.gov/together](https://www.health.nd.gov/together) for more information.

- [Pfizer EUA Fact Sheet for Recipient and Caregivers](https://www.pfizer.com/content/psdm/media/2126144892.pdf)