



COLO R A D O

**Department of Public
Health & Environment**

COVID-19 GUIDANCE

COVID-19 vaccines for children: Tips for parents and guardians

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Vaccines are the strongest layer of protection we can offer our children against COVID-19 and other preventable illnesses. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention has recommended Pfizer vaccinations for children and teens age 5 to 17. Here are some tips and resources for encouraging a positive vaccine experience for your child.

Make a plan.

- Choose where you will get your child's vaccination.
 - Ask your child's health care provider if they offer COVID-19 vaccines in their office.
 - You can also ask your child's school if they plan on hosting vaccine clinics.
 - Many doctor's offices, pharmacies, and pop-up clinics are taking vaccine appointments for children age 5 to 11. Learn more about [finding an appointment for your child](#).
 - Children age 12 to 17 can get vaccinated at any provider that [offers Pfizer vaccines](#).
- Talk to your child's health care provider or local public health agency about your questions. It is safe for your child to receive other routine vaccines on the same day as a COVID-19 vaccine. You may be able to include other routine vaccinations at the appointment, which are vital for keeping kids protected from other illnesses.
 - [COVaxRecords.org](#) - Access your child's immunization records
 - [COVax4Kids.org](#) - Find out where to access no- or low-cost vaccines
 - [Find your local public health agency](#).
 - [Find answers to your questions about COVID-19 vaccines in CDPHE's vaccine FAQ](#).
- Ask for time off from work if you need it. Under Colorado's Healthy Families and Workplaces Act, you get paid time off to take your child to their vaccine appointment.
- If you aren't planning on accompanying your child to their vaccine appointment (i.e., if they are getting vaccinated at a school clinic), [sign a parental consent form](#) and have your child bring it with them to their appointment.
- After your child receives their first vaccine, schedule the second dose three weeks later.

Listen to your child's questions and help them understand what to expect at their appointment.

- It's normal to have questions about something new like a COVID-19 vaccine. If you're not sure about the answers to your child's questions, look them up together using trusted sources like [CDC](#), [CDPHE](#), and the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#).
- Be careful not to promise the vaccine won't hurt or over-reassure your child, as this may signal that you're worried. Instead, be warm and matter-of-fact. Yes, it will pinch just a little, but it will be over quickly, and it's important to keep them and others safe and healthy.

- If helpful, plan a reward to look forward to or give them a greater sense of control by giving them choices: Do they want more information? What would they like to listen to on the way to their appointment? In which arm or leg would they like to receive the vaccine?
- In the days leading up to your child's appointment, remind them of the event so they are not surprised when the day arrives. This also gives other chances for your child to ask questions.
- The COVID-19 vaccines for 5- to 17-year olds are a two-dose series. Talk with your child and help them understand that they will need two doses to keep them safe and healthy.

Fear of needles?

- At the appointment, let the health care team know that your child is nervous about needles. Needle anxiety is common, and many providers are practiced in ways to help people have a more positive experience. You can bring or do the following things to help:
 - Bring a soothing stuffed animal or book.
 - Play a game or watch an engaging video together.
 - Count, sing a song, or blow bubbles to encourage deep breathing.
- Children's Hospital Colorado has [7 Tips to Help Your Child Overcome a Fear of Shots](#). Maybe you don't like them either. These tips can support you too!

During the appointment.

- Point out interesting things in the room to focus on.
- Tell or read stories, play a game, or watch a video together.
- Support your child if they cry. A soothing voice, combined with praise and hugs, will help reassure your child that everything is okay.
- Before you leave, ask your child's doctor for advice on using non-aspirin pain relievers and other steps you can take at home to comfort your child.

After the appointment.

- Focus on what went well. Celebrate your child's success and reward them for taking an important step in keeping themselves and others safe and healthy.
- If they feel a little under the weather, let your child know their body is learning and practicing how to fight COVID. The side effects are common and will only last a day or two.
- Register your child in [v-safe](#), a smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to give personalized health check-ins after your child receives a COVID-19 vaccine. V-safe helps CDC monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in near real time and provides reminders about second doses.
- If your child needs to stay home from school in order to recover from side effects, Colorado's Healthy Families and Workplaces Act entitles you to paid time off from your job to help a family member recover from vaccine side effects.
- Offer liquids more often while your child is recovering from side effects. It is normal for some children to eat less during the 24 hours after getting a vaccine.
- Keep your child's paper vaccination card in a safe place. Take a photo of it or make a copy in case you need to show proof of vaccination. Remember to bring the original card to your child's second dose appointment.
- Be sure that your child gets their second dose of vaccine three weeks after the first dose.
- After the second dose, send a copy of your child's vaccine card to your pediatrician's office if they did not provide the vaccine so it can be added to your child's medical record. You may also need to send a copy to your child's school or college health office.

Additional resources

Children tend to be adaptable and resilient when they receive strong love, guidance, and support from caregivers and loved ones. Caregivers and other adults who support children can help kids by caring for their own well-being too. For this reason, we have also provided some local and national resources to support you, your children, and your families' mental health.

- [Getting Your Child Ready for the COVID-19 Vaccine](#) (American Academy of Pediatrics)
- [Before, During, and After Shots](#) (CDC)
- [Parenting and Caregiving](#) (American Psychological Association)
- [“It’s OK to just be OK”](#): blog from Dr. Chris Rogers, medical director of Child & Adolescent Services at the Medical Center of Aurora and the current president of the Colorado Child & Adolescent Psychiatric Society.
- [Guidance for parents/caregivers to help families cope with the COVID-19 pandemic](#) (National Child Traumatic Stress Network): information about preparing as a family for changes due to COVID-19 and coping with stress, including stress reactions that are seen in different age groups and the practices and responses that can help kids with these reactions.