



The Play Times

Tip Sheet + Resources

December 2021



Playtime staff and trained volunteers protect your children's rights to learn and play by partnering with shelters across the Washington, D.C., region. We create bright, safe spaces with fun activities for children and give parents a break. Play reduces stress, increases confidence and resiliency, and contributes to healthy brain development.

Good News: Children 5+ are now eligible and to get the Covid vaccine!

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that children ages 5 and above receive the vaccine, but we know many parents have questions or concerns. Here are some answers you can also get by speaking with your child's healthcare provider!

Why is it recommended children over 5 get the vaccine?

Covid-19 cases in children and youth can result in hospitalizations, deaths, inflammatory syndromes, and long-term complications, such as "Long Covid," when symptoms last for months. The spread of the "Delta variant" resulted in a surge of Covid-19 cases in children throughout the summer. During a 6-week period in late June to mid-August, Covid-19 hospitalizations among children and adolescents increased five-fold. Children who have existing underlying medical conditions (such as obesity, diabetes, asthma or chronic lung disease, sickle cell disease, or immunosuppression) are more at risk for becoming severely ill from Covid-19 than other children. Similar to the adult vaccine, the Covid vaccination for kids is about **91% effective** in preventing Covid-19 among children aged 5-11 years.

Was the vaccine tested and is it safe?

Before recommending the two-dose Pfizer vaccine for children, the vaccine was tested on thousands of children whose parents volunteered last spring. One study included 4,600 children in the 5-11 age range, some getting the vaccine and others a sugar pill. Among the 1,305 children given the vaccine, 3 still contracted Covid-19. Among 663 children given the sugar pill, 16 caught Covid-19. These results are similar to what was seen in adult vaccine trials, with 91% success rates in preventing Covid-19 among children aged 5-11 years.

Another study was done with children ages 12 through 15 with over 2,200 children. Half were given the vaccine and half the sugar pill. In this age group, there were no cases of Covid-19 in the 1,005 children given the Pfizer

vaccine. Among the 978 children given the sugar pill, there were 16 cases of Covid-19.

These studies led the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to approve the Pfizer vaccine for children 5+. Leading scientists, the CDC, and FDA agree that the benefits of Covid-19 vaccination outweigh the possible risks.

Kids ages 12 years and older receive the same dosage of Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine as adults. Children 5-11 receive an age-appropriate dose that is 1/3 of the adult version of the vaccine and is given with smaller needles designed for kids.

What are possible side effects of the vaccine for kids?

Most children experience no side effects, but it's possible for children to feel pain, redness or swelling in the arm where the vaccine was given, or like other vaccines: tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever or nausea. Be sure to tell the doctor or nurse about any allergies your child may have.

Why are people getting the vaccine?

The Covid vaccine can help keep children from getting seriously sick even if they do get Covid-19. Getting vaccinated will help kids stay in school and participate in more in-person events and group activities safely, now and in the future. Vaccinating children also helps to protect other family members, like siblings who are not eligible for vaccination and those who may be high risk. Student athletes in DC public schools over the age of 12 are required to be fully vaccinated.

Where can we get the vaccine?

There are many places to get the vaccine. To make an appointment, check with your child's healthcare provider or local pharmacy's website to see if vaccination appointments are available for children. Other ways to find a Covid-19 vaccine: Text your

ZIP code to 438829 or call 1-800-232-0233 to find locations near you. DCPS Covid-19 vaccination clinics are walk-up sites, and no appointment is necessary, check your child's elementary school to see dates and hours. You can also check DC's website: coronavirus.dc.gov

The vaccine is provided free of charge to all people living in the United States, regardless of their immigration or health insurance status. The Pfizer vaccine for children is given in two doses, three weeks apart. **Still have questions? Consult your health care provider so you can make the decision that best protects your family!** (Sources: CDC, FDA and Mayo Clinic, 2021)



Mental Health Around the Holidays

Taking care of yourself and your family can be extra hard around the holidays, especially when you're in between homes. For many people, the end of the year often comes with extra deadlines, expenses, and memories that can feel overwhelming and stressful. Planning ahead and asking for support can help. Here are some tips:

Acknowledge Your Feelings

You don't need to force yourself to be happy and celebrate. Acknowledging your feelings of sadness is healthy. It's okay to set boundaries, even with our loved ones. Make time for self-care. Communicating your plans to others beforehand can help things go more smoothly.

Realistic Expectations

Holidays often come with a lot of pressure and expectations. Practice being compassionate to yourself and others who may also be struggling to meet those expectations this year.

Make Space for New Traditions

For different reasons, your holiday plans may look very different this year. That is completely normal as families change. That doesn't mean that it can't be special and filled with time to make new traditions and happy memories. For example, introduce your children to your favorite holiday movie. Take the kids ice skating or to the Holiday Boat parade (free at the Warf on December 4th from 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.).

Reach Out

Try using technology to help connect with family or friends virtually if you are unable to meet in person or find yourself feeling isolated.

Get as Much Sunlight as Possible

The lack of natural light during the winter can have a serious impact on your mental health. Try to plan outdoor activities during the daytime or sit near windows to make sure you're still getting sun! This helps regulate your mood and your sleeping, which also is key when dealing with stress.

Seek Professional Help if You Need It.

It's possible you may still struggle with feeling depressed or anxious. There are many 24-hour hotlines that offer in the moment crisis support (listed below). For ongoing needs, it's important to get connected to a doctor or other mental health professional.

Mental Health Hotlines

- National Suicide Prevention Line: 1-800-273-8255
1-888-628-9454 [Spanish]
1-800-799-4889 [TTY]
- Crisis Text Line: text 741-741
- The Crisis Call Center: 1-800-273-8255
- SAMHSA alcohol/drug addiction National Helpline: 800 662-4357

Food Resources

- <https://foodfinder.us/>
- Hunger Lifeline: 202-644-9807
- Martha's Table: marthastable.org/covid19/
- The Hopeline: 1-877-235-4525
- Bread for the City: 202-265-2400 (NW Location) or 202 561-8587 (SE Location)
- DC Food Project: <https://dcfoodproject.org/emergency-food-access>
- Capital Area Food Bank: www.capitalareafoodbank.org/COVID19response