



COVID-19 Vaccine for Children Under 5: Don't Wait, Vaccinate!

With the recent decision by the FDA and CDC, both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines are now available for anyone at least 6 months old. This decision will provide COVID-19 vaccine access to approximately 20 million additional people in the US.

Vaccines are the best way to prevent serious illness or death from COVID-19. As noted on the CDC website (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/expect.html>, updated July 12, 2022); "Getting a COVID-19 vaccine after having COVID-19 provides added protection to your immune system. People who already had COVID-19 and do not get vaccinated after their recovery are more likely to get COVID-19 again than those who get vaccinated after their recovery." Thus, all children, including children who have already had COVID-19, should get vaccinated.

While COVID-19 is less likely to be severe in children, young age does not guarantee mild illness. In Ohio, since March 2020, more than 3,600 children have been hospitalized with COVID-19 and 31 children have died. Across the US, greater than 50% of the children who died had no known underlying risk factor and this number increases to over 65% for children under 2 years of age. This is why **we need to vaccinate ALL children against COVID-19.**

The Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and Ohio's children's hospitals collectively support vaccination against COVID-19 for the newly eligible population, ages 6 months through 5 years old.

Why?

- COVID-19 vaccines help provide **better immunity than natural infection** and **enhance immunity after infection.**
- COVID-19 vaccines help **protect patients from severe acute illness, hospitalization, and death.**
- COVID-19 vaccines help **protect against secondary complications of COVID** such as Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) and Post-COVID-19 Syndrome.

Currently, Omicron BA-5 is the most common strain circulating in the US. However, COVID-19 is constantly evolving with the risk of developing even more dangerous variants. Vaccines are the best way to decrease the ability of the virus to mutate. At each stage of the pandemic, we must keep ourselves maximally protected and use the tools available to us. Immunizing our youngest children protects them against severe infection, hospitalization, long-term complications, and death. Don't Wait, Vaccinate!