

## **FINALLY - Vaccines for Our Little Ones**

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Parents of the 18 million children under five are relieved. The CDC has accepted the recommendations of the FDA and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' (ACIP) that all children 6 months through 5 years of age should receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

Parents of children under 5 have been waiting for months for the FDA to authorize this vaccine. Many families have continued to limit their social activities with family and friends because their children were unprotected.

Children under 5 were the only age group without a Covid vaccine. Covid has killed 442 children under 5 since January 2020 and is one of the top 10 causes of death in children. During the omicron surge, children under 4 had the greatest increase in their risk of hospitalization due to Covid-19. U.S. Infants and children aged 0–4 years were hospitalized at approximately five times the rate during Delta variant.

Parents have 2 choices for vaccines and should discuss with their child's primary healthcare provider. The vaccines were not studied head-to-head and must be looked at separately. Both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines were approved. Both are mRNA vaccines, but they have some differences in number of shots, dosage, and age recommendations. The Moderna vaccine is two doses of 25 mcg administered 3 weeks apart for ages 6 months to 5 years. Moderna's two-dose vaccine was about 51% effective for children 6 months to 2 years and 37% effective for ages 2 to 5 at preventing illness from omicron.

The Pfizer vaccine is 3 doses of 3mcg for kids ages 6 months to 4 years given 3 weeks apart for the first 2 doses and the third dose is given 8 weeks later. Pfizer's three-dose vaccine was about 75% effective for 6 months to 2-year-olds, and 82% effective for 2- to 4-year-olds at preventing illness from omicron. But parents must be aware that the third dose is *essential*. Two doses were only about 14% effective for kids under age 2, and 33% effective for those ages 2 to 4. Therefore, only 2 doses of Pfizer will *not* be protective from Covid. This is why the vaccine was not approved in February, a third dose had to be added for efficacy.

The most common side effects of both vaccines are pain at the injection site, irritability and crying, loss of appetite and sleepiness. Very few children developed a fever greater than 102 degrees F. There were no cases of myocarditis in either vaccine trial. These vaccines will continue to be monitored for safety and efficacy.

As of June 19, EVERY state except one has placed an order with the federal government for coronavirus vaccines for young children. Florida did not order any vaccine for their children under 5. If you vote in Florida – please let your governor know that Florida children need protection too.

Keep our children safe.