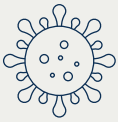


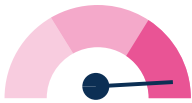
UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS

Getting COVID-19 vs. Getting Vaccinated



We all want to make the best health choices for our children.
So how risky is COVID-19 compared to the vaccines that prevent severe COVID-19?

COVID-19 FAST FACTS



HOW CONTAGIOUS?

Extremely contagious. Only 3 years after the first COVID-19 case, there were more than 102 million cases in the United States.¹



HOW SERIOUS?

Extremely serious. Most children with COVID-19 are at lower risk of getting very sick from COVID-19 than adults. However, children can get very sick from COVID-19, which is why we vaccinate.² In the first 3 years, COVID-19 caused more than 1 million deaths in the United States.³ As of February 2023, COVID-19 was the 8th leading cause of death in children.⁴ Serious complications can include:

Death: Children are at higher risk of hospitalization and death if not treated.^{4,5}

Multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C): Occurs 2–6 weeks after infection regardless of the severity; it can occur even after mild cases of COVID-19 or in children with no symptoms.⁶

Long COVID: Children are at lower risk than adults, but some children experience longer-term symptoms.⁷

VACCINE FAST FACTS



HOW EFFECTIVE?

How well a COVID-19 vaccine works for a child can vary depending on how long it has been since their last dose, the variant they are exposed to, and whether they've previously had COVID-19. The vaccines are effective in preventing hospitalization and death. So even if a vaccinated child gets sick, they are unlikely to have serious illness.^{8,9}



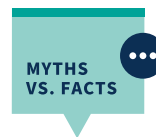
SAFETY RECORDS

Scientists have been studying mRNA technology, which many COVID-19 vaccines use, for more than 30 years. The first COVID-19 vaccines were used in the United States in December 2020.¹² By the end of 2023, more than 711 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccines had been given in the U.S.¹³ Serious side effects are very rare.¹⁴



HOW SAFE?

Serious side effects are rare. Heart inflammation is a rare side effect that most frequently affected adolescent and young adult males after the second dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, but cases have been seen in females and after other doses. In most cases, it is a temporary condition that resolves with treatment and rest.^{10,11}



MYTH BUSTER

Did COVID-19 vaccine research take any safety shortcuts? No. More than 100 years of vaccine research tells us that severe, long-term side effects of vaccines are rare.^{14,15}



COVID-19 vaccine monitoring is the most intense safety monitoring program in U.S. history. Five separate safety systems continuously monitor all vaccines for as long as the vaccines are given.¹⁶ Learn more at hhs.gov/immunization/basics/safety/index.html.

COMPARING THE TWO

COVID-19	VACCINES TO PREVENT SEVERE COVID-19
Common Mild to Moderate Symptoms and Common Side Effects^{14,17,18,19}	
<p>COVID-19 symptoms vary and may change with new variants. Common symptoms of COVID-19 can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fever• Chills• Runny nose• Cough• Vomiting• Nausea, belly pain, or diarrhea• Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing• Sore throat• New loss of taste or smell• Fatigue• Muscle aches or pains• Headache	<p>Common side effects of vaccines to prevent severe COVID-19 are usually mild and last 1–3 days. If side effects occur, they can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Soreness, redness, or swelling where the vaccine was given• Muscle pain• Headache• Tiredness• Fever or chills• Nausea or diarrhea <p>Children 4 and younger may also cry, feel sleepy, or lose their appetite.</p>

Rare, More Serious Symptoms or Complications and Rare Side Effects

6,7,10, 14,18,20,21,22,23,24,25

Serious symptoms or complications of COVID-19 vary and can include:

- Myocarditis*
- Multisystem inflammatory syndrome**
- Neurologic issues, such as seizures
- Long COVID

Serious side effects of vaccines to prevent severe COVID-19 vary and can include:

- Myocarditis (71 cases out of 1 million doses among boys ages 12–15)
- Severe allergic reaction (generally, for every 1 million COVID-19 vaccines administered in the United States, only about 5 cases result in a severe allergic reaction)

*Studies during the COVID-19 pandemic showed that the risk of myocarditis after having COVID-19 is greater than after COVID-19 vaccination.

**Multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) is a rare but severe condition caused by SARS-CoV-2 infection that can affect a child's heart, lungs, and other organs. Cases of MIS-C in 2023 predominantly occurred among unvaccinated children and children whose immunity from prior vaccination had declined over time. COVID-19 vaccination is an important tool in preventing MIS-C.

Sources:

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