

Half of U.S. parents may not vaccinate their youngest child against COVID-19

July 29 2021



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Even as the delta variant of COVID-19 sweeps the globe, leaving those who remain unvaccinated vulnerable, vaccination among adults and teenagers in the United States is stalling, giving rise to concerns over whether parents will vaccinate their young children once vaccines are approved for those under 12 years of age.

In one of the first studies measuring COVID-19 [vaccine hesitancy](#) among parents in the U.S. and the first in New York City, investigators from the CUNY Institute for Implementation Science in Population Health (ISPH) and the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy (CUNY SPH) conducted a community-based online survey of parents of [children](#) under 12 years. Findings from the surveys were published in the *Journal of Pediatrics* (U.S.) and *Vaccine* (NYC).

The survey was conducted in a sample of 2,074 U.S. and 1,119 NYC parents in March and April of 2021 as [vaccine](#) roll-out among adults was expanding. Among all U.S. parents surveyed, only 49 percent reported planning to vaccinate their youngest child when a COVID-19 vaccine is approved for children, while 26 percent of parents said they were unsure and 25 percent said they will not vaccinate their child.

Asian parents were most likely to report planning to vaccinate children in the U.S. survey while parents with less than a [college education](#) and income less than \$25,000 were most likely to be vaccine hesitant. In contrast, a higher proportion of parents in NYC (62 percent) reported planning to vaccinate their youngest child against COVID-19, while 15 percent were unsure and 23 percent did not plan to vaccinate. Also in NYC, non-Hispanic Black parents were less likely to report plans to vaccinate their children for COVID-19 compared to other race/ethnicity groups.

In both surveys, female parents were less likely to report plans to vaccinate their children. Parents who did not plan to vaccinate their youngest child selected concerns about safety as their main reason for vaccine hesitancy, and a quarter of parents also said they didn't think children were at risk for COVID-19 infection and did not need vaccination.

Since the start of the pandemic, more than 4 million U.S. children have

been diagnosed with COVID-19 and over 300 have died. In addition, children infected with COVID-19, even those with mild symptoms, may experience long COVID, similar to adults, with persistent pain and fatigue. When available, vaccines will be an important tool for protecting the health of children and controlling the epidemic.

"The results of our survey, suggesting that as many as half of U.S. parents do not want to vaccinate their children for COVID-19, are concerning, but we can use this information while we await pediatric vaccine approval to work on improving future uptake," says Assistant Professor Chloe Teasdale, lead investigator for the study. "We should start now to develop and deliver information campaigns to help [parents](#) understand the safety and effectiveness of vaccines, as well as the real dangers to children from COVID-19 infection."

More information: Chloe A. Teasdale et al, Plans to Vaccinate Children for COVID-19: A Survey of Us Parents, *The Journal of Pediatrics* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jpeds.2021.07.021](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2021.07.021)

Chloe A. Teasdale et al, Parental plans to vaccinate children for COVID-19 in New York City, *Vaccine* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.vaccine.2021.07.058](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2021.07.058)

Provided by CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy

Citation: Half of U.S. parents may not vaccinate their youngest child against COVID-19 (2021, July 29) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-07-parents-vaccinate-youngest-child-covid-.html>

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