

Vaccinate young kids or no? US parents wrestle with the decision

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US parents are debating vaccinating their children against COVID-19 after the recent authorization of a shot for young kids paved the way for more immunizations in the country where vaccine hesitancy remains widespread.

The authorization last Friday by the US Food and Drug Administration

of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for kids aged five to 11 paves the way for the inoculation of 28 million children in the United States.

The rollout could begin as early as this week, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention expected to give the green light after a panel convenes Tuesday to further discuss clinical recommendations.

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus in the United States there have been 8,300 COVID-19 hospitalizations of children aged five to 11, according to the CDC.

Those figures are comparatively low to the total 45.8 million cases and more than 745,000 deaths in the hard-hit country and severe COVID-19 is rarer in children than adults, although far from non-existent.

The United States is emerging from its latest coronavirus wave and almost 58 percent of the population is fully vaccinated, but hesitancy to get a shot remains high in some areas.

With the new authorization, the spotlight is now on parents of young children as they weigh the decision whether or not to vaccinate their kids.

The believer

Daniela Boettcher, 45, is firmly pro-vaccine, so much so that she didn't wait for authorization of the Pfizer shot for [young kids](#) before getting her five-year-old daughter Lia in line for vaccination.

Last Friday, her daughter was due to receive a dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine as part of a trial. But the US firm pushed the date back by a week.

For Boettcher, the decision was easy.

"I totally believe in the vaccine," she told AFP.

"I read all the articles where they say that the benefits outweigh the possible other effects."

Two things pushed her to get Lia vaccinated as soon as possible: worries her daughter would contract the virus and suffer potentially serious long-term effects, and a wish to ease travel to and from Germany, her country of origin, which she visits several times a year.

Undecided

Cristina Hernandez Winker and David Winker still don't know if their eight-year-old daughter should be vaccinated.

Despite FDA approval of the Pfizer shot, they have lingering doubts over possible side effects for their daughter, named Cristina after her mother.

"We didn't think twice about getting the vaccine, but... this is bit different," David Winker said.

"We are in our early 50s, we're living another 20 years. She's eight years old, she's living another 70 years, what are the long term effects?"

The elder Cristina shares his doubts.

"My daughter was born premature, so I am concerned about how it would affect her immune system," she said.

The couple hasn't ruled out getting the shot for their daughter, but are

waiting to consult with their paediatrician before making a decision.

The sceptic

Sucelys Alvarez, on the other hand, knows for sure she won't vaccinate her six-year-old son, a student at Centner Academy, a private school in Miami that gained national attention for its anti-vaccine stance.

Earlier this year, it effectively banned vaccinated teachers from classrooms and wrote to parents citing concerns based on debunked misinformation that fertility issues could be caused by "being in close proximity" with vaccinated people.

"I don't know what is in those vaccines," said Alvarez, who also has a two-year-old.

"I do believe that kids need immunity and nutrition and I think that with that it would be just more than enough."

For the 29-year-old mom, the [vaccine](#) is "just chemicals with God knows what."

"I don't think that any parent should put that in their kids' bodies."

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