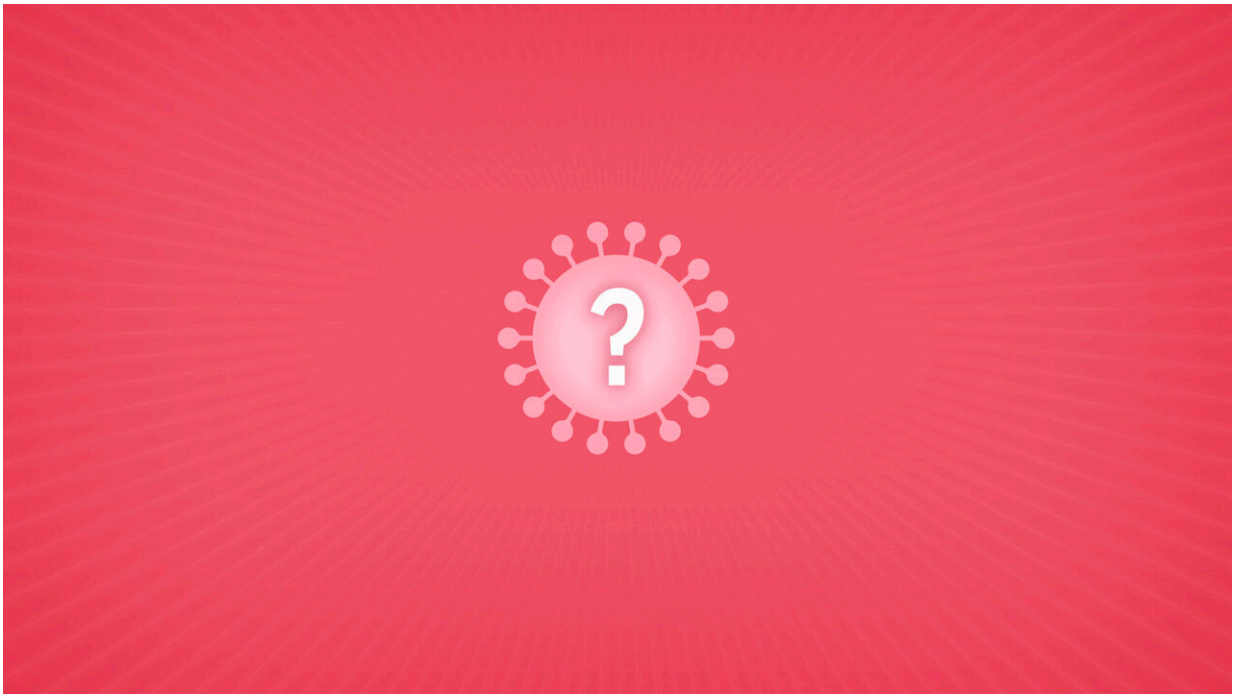


How can I protect a child too young for a COVID-19 vaccine?

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How can I protect a child too young for a COVID-19 vaccine? Credit: AP Illustration/Peter Hamlin

How can I protect a child too young for a COVID-19 vaccine?

Children younger than 5 can't get COVID-19 vaccines in the U.S. yet, but there are steps you can take to protect them from infection over the holidays.

"Surround them with adults and siblings who are vaccinated, boosted if eligible," advises Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

She also encourages taking COVID-19 home tests before gatherings.

The CDC [recommends](#) that anyone who's not vaccinated—including children ages 2 and older—wear masks indoors in public. If your child is younger than 2—or cannot wear a mask for other reasons—the agency suggests limiting visits with unvaccinated people. And it says to keep a distance between the child and others in [public places](#).

Adults might also opt to wear a mask indoors in public to set an example for [young children](#), the CDC says. But in virus hot spots, it says everyone should wear masks in those settings, regardless of whether they're vaccinated.

Matthew Binnicker, an expert in [viral infections](#) at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, says it might be a good idea to have everyone masked at [family gatherings](#) if unvaccinated children are present, since there's still a chance vaccinated adults can spread the virus.

He also suggests limiting gatherings to 10 people or less.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, says family get-togethers shouldn't be confused with "parties with 30, 40, 50 people" where you don't know who is vaccinated.

"Those are the kind of functions—in the context of COVID and particularly in the context of omicron—that you do not want to go to," he says.

In the U.S., children ages 5 to 11 can get kid-size doses of Pfizer's

COVID-19 vaccine. The company is testing an even smaller dose for babies and preschoolers.

More information: [Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for children?](#)

[How can I protect myself from the new omicron variant?](#)

[How will the world decide when the pandemic is over?](#)

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