

'Wait-and-see' approach to COVID vaccine can be risky

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As a parent, you want to make the best choices for your child, especially when it comes to their health. And while many parents are following the advice of health experts to get kids ages five and older vaccinated

against COVID-19, others have taken a "wait-and-see" approach. Currently, [less than half of kids in Illinois are fully vaccinated](#) against COVID-19.

It's normal to worry about exposing your kids to potential risks. But not vaccinating your child is a decision that has its own risks, says Nicole Keller, DO, a board-certified pediatrician and chair of pediatrics at Rush Copley Medical Center.

We asked Keller to explain the risks based on the latest evidence and provide some guidance to parents who may still be hesitant to get their kids vaccinated against COVID-19.

What's wrong with taking a wait-and-see approach to getting my kids vaccinated?

Waiting to see how things go slows our progress toward ending this pandemic. If we as a population were to protect ourselves with vaccination, we would slow the spread of the [virus](#) and get closer to being able to safely emerge from this pandemic that continues to rock our world.

Luck is not a good strategy with this virus, or really any of the illnesses we offer vaccines for. The COVID-19 virus will continue to find pockets of people it can infect and spread, and therefore continue to mutate.

By vaccinating, we are stopping its ability to learn how to get stronger (by mutating) and continue surviving. Also, by vaccinating, you are not just protecting your child, you are also protecting your family, friends and your community.

Should I be worried about potential, unknown long-term effects of vaccines?

Throughout the history of vaccines, side effects are seen typically within the first six to eight weeks after getting the vaccine as the [immune system](#) responds to the new knowledge it is gaining. We don't expect anything beyond this [time window](#) with this vaccine either.

Vaccines work like learning something in school. You go to class, you hear a lecture, you take a test and then you leave. The room, the teacher and the test don't stay with you. What stays with you is the knowledge of how to identify and control the virus when it enters your body. Since only this knowledge remains, there really isn't anything left that could cause problems years down the road.

Also, we absolutely know COVID-19 can and does cause long-term symptoms in people who contract it. The risk of long-term side effects from the actual illness should scare us more. We can't forget the reason we developed this [vaccine](#) in the first place—this virus is dangerous.

How can I know what vaccine information out there can be trusted?

There is a lot of information to wade through, for sure. I would look at the body of evidence and what most scientists and physicians agree on after reviewing the data. Even though recommendations can change, this is part of us learning more over time and adjusting our knowledge and advice based on the most up-to-date information we have.

One person or a small group of people going against the grain should be questioned. Look for people with actual credentials in the field. If you hear something that sounds extreme, look more into it. Sensationalism

sells but isn't always truthful.

Also, take time to pause and think about the information. We tend to respond with emotion first, and once we settle from our [emotional response](#), we may be better able to see through misinformation.

Provided by Rush University Medical Center

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