

Mayo Clinic minute: What to expect with COVID-19 vaccinations for youngest kids

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The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) could grant emergency use authorization of a COVID-19 vaccination for the youngest kids later this month. Pfizer asked the agency to review data and authorize its

COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 6 months to 5 years.

If the FDA committee recommends authorization, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will still need to sign off on the vaccinations before they would go into the littlest of arms.

Once a COVID-19 vaccination is authorized for kids ages 6 months to 5 years, nearly everyone will be eligible for immunization.

Dr. Richard Kennedy, co-director of Mayo Clinic's Vaccine Research Group, says even though younger children have tended to fare better with COVID-19, the reality is that some are still getting sick and even dying of the disease.

More children were hospitalized during the omicron spike than during previous spikes—not because the disease was worse but simply because omicron is so much more infectious and case numbers were so much higher.

"Having this vaccine will help prevent and reduce the level of severe disease and death in children. Even though the rate might be small now, let's get it reduced to zero if we can, or at least reduced as much as possible," says Dr. Kennedy.

Besides protecting children, he says it may also reduce the amount of transmission and exposure in places like day cares and schools.

"The best way to end the pandemic is to stop having the virus transmit," says Dr. Kennedy. "When it transmits, there's a chance for new variants to arise. That's what we're dealing with right now is multiple new variants. The only way to get ahead of that is to stop cases. And vaccines are one of our best preventive tools for doing that."

Parents can be assured that when a vaccination is approved for the most vulnerable of populations it will be safe.

"The FDA and other [regulatory agencies](#) do a very deep dive into the safety data. And that's why you typically see a rollout of a vaccine in several stages. Healthy adults can get it, and then they drop the age range a little bit, and they check it and make sure it's safe. And they drop it again," says Dr. Kennedy.

The stepwise approval follows sequential clinical trials. Once a vaccination is found to be safe in adults, the FDA allows trials in older children. Once safe in that population, clinical trials can begin in [younger children](#).

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