

Q&A: COVID shots as part of recommended routine

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COVID-19 vaccines are making the list of the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention's recommended immunization schedules for both children and adults. Dr. Jody Terranova, assistant professor of pediatrics

at the UConn School of Medicine and president-elect of the Connecticut chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (ACIP), elaborates on the implications of this.

Does this reflect a growing acceptance that COVID-19 vaccination will become a regular part of our lives, like the flu shot?

The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices provides an annual [recommendation](#) for which immunizations providers should offer to patients and at what ages and intervals. As we move forward with additional safety and efficacy data over the past couple of years of administering COVID-19 vaccines it is clear that the benefits of recommending this [vaccine](#) to children and adults outweigh the risks. Yes, just as flu shots are recommended each year to decrease infections, hospitalizations and deaths, COVID-19 vaccines will now be part of the recommended immunizations for children and adults.

What kind of weight does this recommendation carry?

The ACIP's recommendation is held in the highest regard by physicians and our colleagues. Once adopted by the CDC, these recommendations become the official U.S. Adult and Childhood Immunization Schedules. We follow these evidence-based guidelines and adhere to this immunization schedule that is reviewed and updated annually by ACIP.

What is the advantage of adding COVID-19 vaccination to the panel of routine immunizations?

Continuing to acknowledge the safety and efficacy of the COVID-19

vaccines is important to building community trust. This is another step where immunization and infectious disease experts are reviewing data and providing recommendations that weigh risks and benefits.

COVID-19 is not going away and it is important to recognize that using vaccines as a tool to decrease disease burden and save lives, including staying up-to-date on these vaccines, has become necessary.

How does this fit into the larger conversation about childhood immunizations and preventive medicine?

Adding COVID-19 to the immunization schedule fits in well with our other routine childhood immunization recommendations. Immunizations are a key way to prevent diseases at the individual level as well as preventing outbreaks in the population. When we speak with patients and families about the importance of being up to date on immunizations, it is natural to include COVID-19 in this discussion, especially as it is something circulating in all of our communities right now.

How might this impact the discussion with reluctant parents?

Initially, I don't expect this to significantly change conversations we are having with parents. For the most part, we are already recommending COVID-19 vaccines for all children six months and older.

It may help to encourage physicians to more confidently include this as a routine part of their immunization recommendations and over time more families will say yes to the recommendations.

What else should we know?

Another very important recommendation from the ACIP meeting was to

include the COVID-19 vaccines in the Vaccines for Children program. In this program, vaccines are provided to practices free of charge. This will significantly help to address access to vaccines for pediatricians and for their patients.

Provided by University of Connecticut

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