Protecting our Children from COVID-19: How Texans can help

Vaccination is the best way to protect our families and prevent or slow the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, wearing masks and social distancing are proven methods to slow the transmission of COVID-19. Because of the emergence of highly contagious variants, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that everyone over the age of two, even if vaccinated, wear a mask indoors in public. (1)

Why should adults and children wear a mask?
- To protect children who are not eligible to be vaccinated from those who might carry the disease.
- To prevent the spread of new COVID-19 variants that are causing a surge in the U.S. and globally. The Delta variant is 200% more transmissible and has 1,000% more virus particles than the original strain of COVID-19, meaning the virus is more easily and quickly spread - especially in crowded, poorly ventilated areas among people who are not vaccinated. (2) **Children and unvaccinated adults are at greatest risk.**
- Although vaccinated people are protected from severe illness and death from COVID-19, they can still spread the virus to others (though at much lower rates). (3)

The only way to stop these emerging variants of COVID-19 is to:
- Get vaccinated
- Wear a mask
- Social distance

Since May 12, 2021, children 12 years old and older have been eligible to receive the COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine in Texas. (4)

The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective and have been developed and used under the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history, including studies in children. (5)

- As of September 1, 2021, only **61.5%** of people ages 12 years or older in the U.S. are fully vaccinated, and rates of infections, hospitalizations, and deaths remain high. (6-7)
- Nearly 14 million, or **58%**, of the eligible population in Texas is fully vaccinated. (8) **Rates of vaccination across cities and counties in Texas are highly variable.**
- To reach population level immunity, **80%-94%** of Texans need to be immune by vaccination or natural infection. (9-10)
- Evidence suggests vaccine immunity is substantially stronger than natural infection. Individuals who are not vaccinated, even those who have previously tested positive for COVID-19, remain at considerable risk for severe outcomes due to new variants of COVID-19.

Most children are not protected from COVID-19.

Nearly 2/3 of Texans ages 5-19 do not have COVID-19 antibodies. (11)

**26%**

Most children who are eligible for the vaccine are not vaccinated.

Only **26%** of Texans ages 12-17 are vaccinated. (12)
As of August 26, 2021, nearly 4.8 million child COVID-19 cases were reported, representing 14.8% of all cases in the U.S. (13)

In the third week of August, 203,962 new child cases of COVID-19 were reported, representing 22% of all reported cases. (13) Many schools reopened in August, and pediatric cases continue to rise. In Texas, you can check your county transmission rate here: https://sph.uth.edu/dept/bads/covid19-dashboard. (14) Between June 20, 2021 and July 31, 2021, the hospitalization rate of unvaccinated adolescents aged 12–17 years was 10.1 times higher than that of fully vaccinated adolescents. (15)

Children can still experience severe outcomes from COVID-19.

Nationwide, as of May 2021, among children and adolescents ages 0-17 years: (16-17)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>More than 200,000</th>
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<td>had been hospitalized with COVID-19</td>
<td>had died from COVID-19</td>
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Children hospitalizations due to COVID-19 are at an all-time high. (18)
Among adolescents aged 12-17 who were hospitalized with COVID-19, nearly 1/3 required intensive care unit (ICU) admission. (19)

- In some areas of high and increasing cases, children's hospitals are over capacity because of lack of beds and staff shortages. (20)
- Children may experience Long COVID-19. Estimates suggest 10%-45% of children under age 12 experience COVID-19 symptoms lasting longer than five weeks. (21-22)
- Multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) is a rare but serious disease associated with COVID-19. (23) As of August 22, 2021, there were 4,661 cases of MIS-C and 41 deaths in the U.S. (24)
- Children with underlying health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, or obesity and babies under 1 year old are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 compared to children without underlying conditions or older than 1 year old. (25-26)
- Children of color are disproportionately impacted by severe outcomes from COVID-19. (17, 27)
- A child is more likely to experience serious symptoms from COVID-19 than from the vaccine. (17)

The vaccine is safe - please protect yourself, your families, and your neighbors.

Children have a right to be safe.

There are nearly 5 million children under the age of 12 in Texas. These children are not yet eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. (28)

- 2.7 million children under age 12 attended Texas public school (K-6th grade) in the 2020-2021 academic school year. (29) Children attending public school in the 2021-2022 school year will likely be exposed to COVID-19 in school settings. This may be exacerbated by the new and highly contagious variants.
- Because children do not have the autonomy to obtain the COVID-19 vaccine, it is up to the public to protect them - by getting vaccinated, wearing masks, and social distancing. These preventive actions will protect children by reducing transmission in the community.
Protect our children.

Children belong back in school, among their peers and with their teachers. Take preventive actions.

- **Get vaccinated.** For yourself, for your family, for those around you, for those who cannot get vaccinated.

- Protect young children by wearing a mask, social distancing, and washing your hands regularly - even if you are vaccinated.

- Vaccinate your children if they are age 12 or older, and vaccinate your younger children when the vaccine is approved for their age group.

- Ask those who care for or teach your children to get vaccinated.


- Check your antibody status by participating in Texas CARES: (32) https://sph.uth.edu/projects/texascares/

For resources on where to get a COVID-19 vaccine, see below: (33)

- **COVID-19 Vaccination Hub Providers**

- **CDC's Federal Retail Pharmacy Program**
  https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/retail-pharmacy-program/participating-pharmacies.html

- **Texas Vaccine Scheduler**
  https://getthevaccine.dshs.texas.gov/txces/s/?language=en_US

- **DSHS Summer Pop-Ups**
REFERENCES

References


