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**COVID-19 Pediatric Vaccine Interview.**  
**Dr. Patricia Hall, Pediatrician, Upson Co. BOH Member**

**1. Is the vaccine safe?**

Yes, but if you have specific concerns please talk to your primary care doctor and let us help you with reliable information.

At this time Pfizer's vaccine is available for everyone 5 years old and up. All medications that are made available in this country have to go through many steps to be approved. The Covid-19 vaccine has been through this process and the same standards that were used for the adult vaccine were used in children. The vaccine has proven to be very safe and very effective in reducing infection and significantly reducing severe illness.

Cases of myocarditis have been seen after vaccinations but these rates are low and the cases have been mild and often just treated with medication like ibuprofen. These cases of myocarditis have not resulted in any recorded deaths. Also, there have been more cases of myocarditis associated with Covid-19 infections than the vaccine in children.

**2. Are COVID vaccine side effects the same in children?**

Most common side effects from the Covid-19 vaccine are typical to other vaccine we give children. The most common side effect is pain at the injection site and perhaps some redness. Other side effects include fever, headache, body aches, and stomach discomfort. These side effects usually last less than 24 hours and we recommend treating with over the counter medications like Tylenol or ibuprofen. The FDA has given EUA to a lower dose of vaccine for children 5-12 as this dose gave good efficacy with fewer side effects.

**3. Should parents consider getting a child vaccinated for COVID-19?**

The short answer is yes. We are seeing more hospitalizations from Covid-19 in children than we saw more hospitalizations from Covid-19 in August and September than we had seen the whole pandemic. We know most children don't get severely sick with Covid-19, but some children will. We are also concerned about the long-term effects of Covid-19 infection on children also since we are certainly seeing this in adults. In addition, we know that getting Covid-19 will keep kids out of school and activities that they enjoy and if we can avoid that we would like to do so.

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Meriwether, Pike, Spalding, Troup, and Upson Counties

#### **4. Are there specific concerns for kids getting COVID vaccines?**

Side effects for children getting the vaccine are very similar to adults. Most of the cases of myocarditis related to Covid-19 vaccine have been in young males (15-26), but this group of people are more prone to this condition in general. The cases of myocarditis have been treatable and less common than myocarditis caused by a covid-19 infection.

#### **5. Does the vaccine affect fertility?**

Vaccines in general, though they may cause side effects in the few days after administration, do not generally cause long term consequences. There has been no evidence to show that the vaccine can lead to infertility. Vaccines for adults have been available for almost a year and trials started 18 months ago. We have not seen any significant reduction in fertility in these adults or teens.

#### **6. Does going back to school increase child's risk of catching or transmitting the coronavirus?**

Anytime a child is around larger amounts of people there is increased risk of transmission. Children have always been exposed to illness through school and infections of Covid-19, especially with the more infectious variants we have now, are certainly possible in a school setting.

#### **7. Would getting the COVID-19 vaccination protect parents if child gets COVID-19?**

Parents that are vaccinated are less likely to get infected from a child that has Covid-19 and are much less likely to have severe disease allowing them to care for their sick child better.

#### **8. What are the benefits of getting a child vaccinated?**

- 1) Reduced risk of infection from Covid-19
- 2) Significantly reduced risk of severe infection and reduced time of illness if you do get a breakthrough infection
- 3) Reduced risk of transmitting Covid-19 to more vulnerable individuals
- 4) The child will be able to continue with their activities with less risk of significant illness and need for quarantine.

#### **9. If a child is turning 12 in a couple of months. Should parents wait for the adult dose?**

I would not wait. The lower dose gave good immunity in the trial even the older children (10-12). The vaccine even at a lower dose should provide good protection for a child without having to wait for the higher dose.

#### **10. Why do kids need the vaccine if they do not get as sick as adults?**

There have been over 700 pediatric deaths from Covid-19 in the US since the pandemic began. Not all of these children had underlying conditions. Pediatric hospitals saw a significant increase in hospitalization from Covid-19 in the past several months. The vaccine has proven to be very safe but the virus has the potential to make children very sick.

Also, children need to be in school, go to sports practice, attend church and other extracurricular activities. An infection with Covid-19 will keep them from these things.