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**COVID-19 Pediatric Vaccine Interview.**  
**Dr. Lewis Jackson, Director of Pediatrics, Piedmont Physicians**

**1. Is the vaccine safe?**

Yes. Although all vaccines have the potential for mild side effects, the COVID vaccine is much safer than having COVID infection without being vaccinated. The chance for a child to have severe case or bad outcome from COVID infection is much greater this year than in 2020. In 2020, most children and teens who had COVID infection had a predictable mild course. That is no longer true.

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

They are similar but appear much milder since children get smaller dose. The most common side effects are muscle soreness (as with any vaccine) and some fatigue. As with adults, most side effects do not last more than 1-2 days.

Some have heard that there is a rare chance of young teenage males getting heart condition called myocarditis from the vaccine. If it occurs, it is very mild can clear on its own. However, an unvaccinated child who gets COVID infection is much more likely to get myocarditis than a child who gets the COVID vaccine.

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

Absolutely. The vaccine is safer than taking your chances with the illness. Even for those who have recovered from the COVID infection, the vaccine gives extra immunity to protect against a future recurrence of COVID-19.

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

Yes. Prior to getting the COVID vaccine, parents complete a questionnaire that screens for any concerns that could present a problem with COVID vaccination.

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

So far, there is no evidence the vaccine affects fertility. Women who are pregnant who have received the vaccine (and women who are vaccinated who later become pregnant) have already been found to have better pregnancy outcomes and fewer complications than unvaccinated pregnant women. No other

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vaccine affects fertility, so there is no reason to think that the COVID vaccine will do so, but ongoing surveillance will continue to make sure that this remains true.

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

It is impossible to get a COVID infection or to be contagious with COVID because of receiving the COVID vaccine. Returning to school comes with a risk of COVID infection from being around others in the school who possibly have COVID.

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

If a child becomes sick with COVID, the child's parents are less likely to get COVID from their children if the children is vaccinated and if they themselves are also vaccinated.

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

It reduces the risk of the child getting sick at any level of illness from COVID, and it greatly reduces the chances of getting sick enough from COVID to require hospitalization or death (which are becoming increasingly common among children). IF a child is vaccinated and catches a breakthrough case of COVID, their COVID will be much milder, and they will be much less contagious to anyone around them.

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

The CDC has stated that a child can get the pediatric dose for their first COVID vaccine, then the adult dose for the second dose if their 12<sup>th</sup> birthday falls in the 21- day window between the first and second doses. However, it is logistically easier for most clinics. That give the vaccine to give the same type of vaccine for both doses. If the 12<sup>th</sup> birthday is less than a month away, families can wait and get the adult version for both doses.

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

The number of children and teens who have had serious cases of COVID requiring prolonged recovery or even hospitalization and death has increased greatly from 2020. Children need the vaccine to protect them against this increasing chance of bad outcome. Unvaccinated children are also much more likely to spread a case of COVID (even without obvious symptoms) to their family members, many of whom could be at much higher risk of bad outcome themselves. Even vaccinated adults can have breakthrough cases, which are usually mild. But if vaccinated adult has underlying medical problems, even a breakthrough case could turn more serious. Vaccinating the children around them reduces the risk even further.