To: CAHAN San Diego Participants  
Date: February 11, 2022  
From: Public Health Services

Health Advisory Update #49: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Addressing Low COVID-19 Vaccination Rates in Children 5-11 Years of Age

Key Messages

- The CDC, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that all children ages 5 years and older should be vaccinated against COVID-19 to prevent both short- and long-term health complications.
- Only 36% of children ages 5-11 in San Diego County have received one dose of vaccine and only 26% are fully vaccinated.
- Among vaccinated children and adolescents, post vaccination myocarditis is lowest in 5 through 11-year-olds, and only above background rate following second dose in males.
- Research has shown that pediatricians remain the most trusted source of information regarding COVID-19 vaccines for hesitant parents. Resources are available to help address vaccine hesitancy.
- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services are now providing reimbursement for COVID-19 vaccine counseling visits for children, even if vaccine is not directly administered.
- Healthcare providers are urged to strongly recommend that children get fully vaccinated (if they are 5 years and older) and a booster dose when due (if they are 12 years and older).

Situation

Background

During the last month, San Diego County has experienced record numbers of COVID-19 cases, leading to increased COVID-19-related hospitalizations in all age groups. Specifically, hospitalizations among children aged 5-11 years with COVID-19 are the highest since the beginning of the pandemic, increasing from no cases/week reported late November through early-December to 12 cases/week in mid-January 2022 (Figure 1). Most of the recent hospitalizations among this age group have been among children who were not fully vaccinated. The average age of children in California with Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) is 8 years of age.

Vaccine safety and effectiveness

On November 2, 2021, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended that children 5–11 years of age receive a 2-dose series of Pfizer pediatric vaccine. On December 31, 2021, CDC reported that over 8.7 million doses of Pfizer vaccine had been administered to this age group and serious adverse events were rarely reported. Data suggests that COVID-19 vaccination remains highly protective against hospitalizations and long-term complications, including Multi-system Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C). On January 5, 2022, the ACIP reviewed safety data in children using three different systems, the Vaccine Safety Datalink, v-safe, and the Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System, as well as vaccine effectiveness data, which again showed that this vaccine is safe and effective. At this meeting the ACIP specifically reviewed data on post-vaccination (Pfizer) myocarditis and pericarditis. Cases remain rare but more common males and 16 and 17-year-olds. These events are also more common...
after second doses but are self-limited with largely supportive care. Of children, 5 through 11-year-olds were least affected, and only had higher than background rates after second doses in males. ACIP reviewed additional safety data on myocarditis during a meeting on February 4, 2022. They included 90-day follow up on patients 12–29 years old with myocarditis or pericarditis in VAERS; 360 patients (56% of total) were able to be interviewed; ~20% were aged 12–14 years of age. Most patients reported no impact on their quality of life\(^1\), and most did not report missing school (8%) or work (5%). Only 13 (4%) were readmitted to the hospital; 81% (309) of cardiologists or healthcare providers conducting follow up indicated the patient was fully or probably recovered. There were no reported deaths.

Figure 1. Number of 5- through 11-year-olds with COVID-19 admitted to hospitals in San Diego County, by admission date.*

* This includes admissions due to COVID-19 related illness and COVID-19 infection detected through screening.

Figure 2. U.S. reporting rate of myocarditis (per 1 million doses administered) after Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination, 7-day risk interval*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dose 1</td>
<td>Dose 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–11 years</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12–15 years</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16–17 years (incl.)</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>70.2</td>
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*Source: Slide 13 COVID-19 vaccine safety updates: Primary series in children and adolescents

**Booster doses**

During the January 5, 2022 meeting, ACIP also recommended a booster dose for everyone age 12 and over in light of the reassuring vaccine safety data and the emerging evidence that a booster dose significantly increases protection

\(^1\) Multiple rated activities were assessed; see source for details (ACIP February 5, 2022: Myocarditis Outcomes Following mRNA COVID-19 Vaccination).
against infection with the Omicron variant. It is recommended that youth ages 12–17 receive a single Pfizer vaccine
dose at least 5 months after completing the primary series, and people age 18 and over receive either a Pfizer or
Moderna booster. For current information on COVID-19 vaccine eligibility see Provider COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility
Summary Table.

Low vaccination rates in 5- through 11-year-olds
Despite the demonstrated safety and efficacy of the Pfizer vaccine in children and the unprecedented surge in
COVID-19 cases, vaccination rates continue to be low in children aged 5–11 years. In San Diego County, only 36%
have received a first dose compared to 81% of 12- through 17-year-olds. While 30% and 29% of Hispanic/Latino and
White 5 through 11-year-olds have received one dose of vaccine, respectively, only 17% of Black and African
American 5 through 11-year-olds have received one dose.

Vaccine acceptance
Parental concerns about COVID-19 vaccination include potential unknown long-term health issues, side effects, and
belief that the vaccine is too new, as well as not being worried about COVID-19 or thinking that the vaccine is
unnecessary. Per Kaiser Family Foundation, pediatricians are the most trusted source of information on the COVID-19
vaccine for 77% of parents, yet only 37% of parents of children ages 5 to 11 say they have spoken with their child's
pediatrician about the COVID-19 vaccine. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services are now providing
reimbursement for COVID-19 counseling visits, even if vaccine is not directly administered.

Actions Requested
1. If not already enrolled, pediatric providers can listen to the recorded webinar on how to enroll in the California
COVID-19 vaccination program and participate in COVID-19 vaccination.
2. Contact the parents/caregivers of patients 5 years of age and older.
   a. Urge them to get their child(ren) up to date with their vaccines (i.e., complete a primary vaccine series and
      get a booster as soon as they are eligible). Note that children who have recently been infected with COVID-19
      can get a vaccine (including a booster) as soon as their acute illness has resolved, and they have completed
      isolation.
   b. Inform them how access COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccines are widely available across San Diego County, including
      at County vaccine sites, pharmacies, and other locations. Many do not require an appointment. To search for a
      vaccine provider, by location and vaccine type, visit Vaccination by Location/Cita De Vacuna (Spanish). On
      request, large health systems in the County are also offering mobile vaccination van for special events,
      including schools.
3. Consider posting information about the importance of COVID-19 vaccine on your medical practice’s website and
   social media. See COVID-19 vaccine promotional resources for children and teens: CDC and AAP.
4. Report vaccine-related adverse events and vaccine administration errors to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting
   System (VAERS), and to the County Epidemiology and Immunization Services Branch at
   IZINFO.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov or Fax: (619) 692-5677.

Resources
CDC: How to Talk with Parents and Caregivers about COVID-19 Vaccination
AAP: COVID-19 Vaccine Campaign Toolkit

Thank you for your participation.

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