



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**

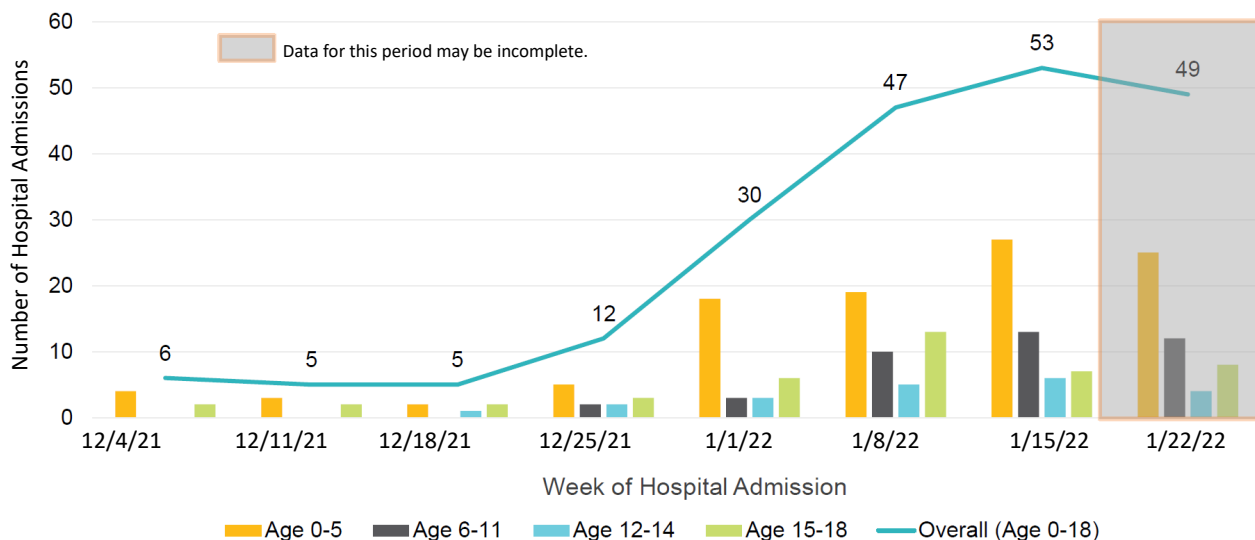
*Background*

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

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.

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

Age group	Males		Females	
	Dose 1	Dose 2	Dose 1	Dose 2
5–11 years	0.0	4.3	Not calculated†	2.0
12–15 years	4.8	45.7	1.0	3.8
16–17 years (included for reference)	6.1	70.2	0.0	7.6

\*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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

#### **CAHAN San Diego**

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