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May 13, 2021

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Doctors, Public Health Leaders Urge Michigan Parents to Protect Adolescents with the COVID-19 Vaccine

LANSING, Mich. – Doctors and state and national public health leaders today urged Michigan parents to get their 12- to 15-year-old children vaccinated with Pfizer’s COVID-19 vaccine, authorized for emergency use in this age group on Monday by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and recommended yesterday by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

“Vaccinating children is key to protecting kids from getting seriously ill, limiting the spread of COVID-19 and helping families and communities return to normalcy,” said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief medical executive and chief deputy director for health for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). “All parents of teens should reach out to their primary care providers to talk about the vaccines and how they can get their child vaccinated as soon as possible.”

Approximately 498,000 12- to 15-year-olds in Michigan are now eligible for vaccinations (see a county-by-county breakdown [here](#)), according to state census data. Parents can find a vaccination site by visiting Michigan.gov/COVIDVaccine or calling 2-1-1. Vaccinations will be available at many locations statewide by appointment or walk-in starting today.

In the phase 3 clinical trial, Pfizer-BioNTech enrolled 2,260 participants age 12 to 15 and gave them either two doses of the vaccine (same dosage and regimen as for people age 16 and older) or a placebo three weeks apart. The researchers recorded 18 cases of symptomatic coronavirus infection in the placebo group, and none among the children who received the vaccine.

The side effects in the adolescent trial were comparable to those seen in participants 16 to 25 years old from earlier Pfizer trials — all of which are indications that the vaccine is working to build immunity. They include pain at the injection site, tiredness, headache, chills, muscle pain, fever and joint pain.

“To date, 138 million doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine have been administered to people age 16 and older in the U.S., and the data continues to show that the vaccine is safe and effective,” said Veronica McNally, president of the Franny Strong Foundation, founder of the I Vaccinate campaign and voting member of the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

In Michigan, more than 4 million doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine have been administered to people 16 and older.

“This is wonderful news coming on the heels of Michigan hitting its first milestone of the ‘Vacc to Normal’ plan earlier this week, with 55% of Michiganders having received at least one dose of the

COVID-19 vaccine,” said Kerry Ebersole Singh, director of the Protect Michigan Commission. “And now, a new age group will have access to this safe and effective vaccine.”

Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, pediatrician and director of the Michigan State University and Hurley Children's Hospital Pediatric Public Health Initiative, had her 12- and 15-year-old daughters vaccinated on camera during the press event. “They’ve been literally jumping up and down in excitement over being able to get this vaccine,” said Dr. Hanna-Attisha. “As a parent, it’s a relief to know that with these vaccinations today, they are on their way to being protected.”

Dr. Hanna-Attisha also emphasized that while most children and teens with COVID-19 have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all, the virus can be serious for some, especially those with certain underlying conditions, such as asthma or diabetes.

“During the recent surge in Michigan, we saw a marked increase in serious pediatric COVID cases requiring hospitalization,” said Dr. Hanna-Attisha.

Children age 10 to 19 make up 12.6% of total cases in Michigan since March 2020, with more than 102,000 cases statewide (county-by-county breakdown of confirmed COVID-19 cases in 0 to 15-year-olds available [here](#)). There have been more than 1,300 COVID-related hospitalizations in children under the age of 18 in Michigan since August 2020.

Medical experts are also concerned about a rare but serious medical condition called [Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children \(MIS-C\)](#). In a recent [open letter](#), experts from Michigan’s Children’s Hospital Clinical Leadership Collaborative and the Michigan Health & Hospital Association said cases of MIS-C could become more prevalent even as we see COVID-19 cases in Michigan decline.

“It is important that parents and pediatricians are aware that cases of MIS-C associated with COVID-19 could likely present in children between two and five weeks after the peak of Michigan’s recent surge of COVID-19,” said Dr. Matthew Hornik, president of the Michigan Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Lisa Sanchez Metropoulos, Genesee County mother of two children, one of whom has asthma and is at high risk of complications from COVID-19, said the past year has been emotionally draining for her family.

“To say ‘no’ to your kids for a year straight is just heartbreaking, but we knew what this virus could do to our son,” said Metropoulos. “But now it feels like a huge weight is lifted, and we’re looking forward to seeing friends and family and getting back to all the things we love to do.”

Michigan residents seeking more information about the COVID-19 vaccine can visit Michigan.gov/COVIDvaccine. Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at Michigan.gov/Coronavirus and CDC.gov/Coronavirus.

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