

Dear VFC Provider,

## Children still need you to help protect them from COVID-19!

In the United States, COVID-19 has so far caused over

- **12 million** children to be infected.
- **119,000** children to be hospitalized
- **1400** children to die.

Pharmacies that have been administering COVID-19 vaccines to older Californians are not authorized to vaccinate children under three years who may soon become eligible. While mass vaccination venues were appropriate for adults and even older children, parents may be unlikely to utilize these sites to vaccinate children under 5 years of age.



As the medical home providing routine care to children, you are the most trusted vaccinator and source of COVID-19 information. Offering COVID-19 vaccines at the same time as other routine vaccines increases opportunities for vaccination. California's children need **you** to enroll in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program to help protect them.

## COVID-19 Vaccine Effectiveness & Safety

**COVID-19 vaccines are very effective.** Over **200 million** people, including 20 million children, have safely received COVID-19 vaccine in the United States and are now protected against serious COVID-19 infection. The vaccine does not protect against all pediatric COVID-19 infection, but studies have shown it is effective in preventing severe illness and hospitalization caused by the Omicron variant.<sup>1,2</sup> The vaccine can also help protect others at home by reducing transmission.

**The COVID-19 vaccine is 91% effective against Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C),** a serious condition that can occur after COVID-19 infection, even after mild or asymptomatic infection.<sup>3</sup> In California, there have been over **920** cases of MIS-C. Over half of these children were admitted to an ICU.

**COVID-19 vaccines are safe.** COVID-19 vaccines have been tracked under the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history. Getting vaccinated is much, much safer than the risks of getting sick with COVID-19.

**Recommend pediatric COVID-19 vaccination to families.** Please visit <https://eziz.org/covid> for resources such as the latest clinical talking points for recommending COVID-19 vaccination for children.

<sup>1</sup> Klein, Nicola P., et al. Effectiveness of COVID-19 Pfizer-BioNTech BNT162b2 mRNA Vaccination in Preventing COVID-19-Associated Emergency Department and Urgent Care Encounters and Hospitalizations Among Nonimmunocompromised Children and Adolescents Aged 5-17 Years – VISION Network, 10 States, April 2021-January 2022. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) 71(9), March 1, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Price, Ashley M., Olson, Samantha M., et al. BNT162b2 Protection against the Omicron Variant in Children and Adolescents. New England Journal of Medicine 10.1056/NEJMoa2202826. March 30, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Zambrano, Laura D., Newhams, Margaret M., et al. Effectiveness of BNT162b2 (Pfizer-BioNTech) mRNA Vaccination Against Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children Among Persons Aged 12-18 Years – United States, July-December 2021. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) 71(2), January 14, 2022.



## Becoming a COVID-19 Vaccinator is easier than ever.

There are many resources available to support you.

- The KidsVaxGrant program offers **up to \$25,000** for your clinic to support COVID-19 administration.
- You can request supplemental staff, at no cost, through your local Medical Health Operational Area Coordinator (MHOAC) program.
- Providers CAN receive reimbursement for educating about or administering COVID-19 vaccine. Current reimbursement for Medi-Cal patients is \$67 per dose administration and contracted rates for commercial insurance plans. Soon, vaccine counseling for Medi-Cal patients will be a reimbursable benefit.

## Vaccine storage, handling, and administration have been simplified.

- You don't need an ultra-low freezer! You may store COVID-19 vaccines with your routine childhood vaccines.
- Concerns about vaccine wastage should NOT deter providers from administering COVID-19 vaccine. CDC and CDPH understand that some wastage of COVID-19 vaccine is unavoidable, even if that means puncturing a vial to vaccinate one child.
- Pfizer now comes in smaller quantities and may be stored longer, orders may be submitted weekly, and short-dated vaccine will be transported to other providers for you – for free!

Providers **DON'T** need an ultra-cold freezer to store COVID-19 vaccine.

Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine products can be stored in routine refrigerators for up to 10 weeks. You may use the same refrigerators already being used for VFC vaccines.

Please visit [eziz.org/covid/enrollment/vfc](https://eziz.org/covid/enrollment/vfc) to enroll in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program or call the Provider Call Center at (833) 502-1245 to get your enrollment questions answered.

## COVID-19 Vaccine Administration Tips

- **COVID-19 vaccine can be given with all routine pediatric immunizations.** Reassure patients and remind staff that COVID-19 vaccines may be administered safely with other vaccines.
- **Catch-up immunization:** Many children have missed their routine vaccines in the pandemic. Always check if a patient is up-to-date and, if not, offer catch-up vaccines.
- **Prioritize COVID-19 vaccination for children with chronic conditions and disabilities.** These children are at higher risk for severe COVID-19.
- **Integrate the Observation Period into the visit.** Use the 15-minute observation time after COVID-19 vaccination (30 minutes, if at higher risk for anaphylaxis) to encourage families to participate in **V-safe**, complete health screening questionnaires and counseling.

**Thank you.** During this challenging time, thank you for your dedication to protecting children through vaccination. **To support your efforts, this mailing includes:** 5 copies of this letter to distribute among clinic staff and 100 copies of "Talk to Your Doc: Questions about COVID-19 Vaccines" to have available in your clinic. To access an online version of "Talk to Your Doc," please visit [eziz.org/covid/enrollment/vfc](https://eziz.org/covid/enrollment/vfc).