



Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs

Executive Office: 6728 Old McLean Village Drive • McLean, VA 22101-3906
Phone (703) 556-9222 • Fax (703) 556-8729 • www.ampdc.org • info@ampdc.org

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A Message from Pediatric Department Chairs

The mission of the Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs, which includes leaders of departments of pediatrics at academic medical centers throughout North America is to advance and protect child health. We thus applaud the FDA decision on October 29, 2021, to issue an Emergency Use Authorization for a new formulation of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for use in children aged 5–11 years, administered as 2 doses (10 µg, 0.2 mL each), 3 weeks apart. This decision was followed on November 2, 2021 by a recommendation by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices for the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in children aged 5–11 years for the prevention of COVID-19. The decision for approval was based on a review of data from a clinical trial that initially enrolled >2,200 participants in the 5-11 year age group, randomized to receive either vaccine or placebo. This vaccine was shown to have an efficacy of >90% in preventing symptomatic, laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 in children aged 5–11 years with or without evidence of previous SARS-CoV-2 infection. The antibody response to 2 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine without evidence of previous SARS-CoV-2 infection was at least as high as the response observed in 16–25 year old subjects. Serious adverse events were uncommon and occurred with similar frequency among vaccine recipients and those given placebo.

The recent surge of COVID-19 cases across the country caused by the delta variant has shown that this pandemic is far from over and that children need to be protected from short- and long-term consequences of the disease. The lack of vaccine availability, particularly for children below 12 years of age, has had an undeniable impact on the disproportionately large number of infected children in the recent wave. Lack of vaccination has also impacted in-person school attendance, with mental and behavioral health problems superimposed on learning concerns.

While the emergency use approval of the vaccine for children aged 5-11 years is a great step forward, vaccine related misinformation is rampant and needs to be actively addressed with factual information so the maximum number of children can be protected. We urge pediatricians and healthcare workers dealing with children to take the lead in promoting vaccination of eligible children. It is only through a concerted effort by all that we will achieve the goal of vaccinating every child in the U.S. and beyond. We encourage that strategies be developed to facilitate vaccine delivery to demographic groups that have experienced disproportionate COVID-19 morbidity and mortality and to prevent secondary effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as reduced in-person learning.

Together, we can put an end to the worst pandemic of our generation.

On behalf of The Pediatric Department Chairs of North America,

Ann Reed, MD

Duke University School of Medicine

John Barnard, MD

Nationwide Children's Hospital and The Ohio State University

Alexander G. Bassuk, MD, PhD

The University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital

Geoffrey Binney, Jr, MD, MPH

Tufts Children's Hospital

Clifford Bogue, MD

Yale School of Medicine

Charlotte M. Boney, MD

UMass Chan Medical School-Baystate

Michael D. Cabana, MD, MPH

Children's Hospital at Montefiore (CHAM)/Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Douglas Carlson, MD

Southern Illinois University

Francis Chan, MD

Loma Linda University School of Medicine

Mitchell B. Cohen, MD

University of Alabama at Birmingham

Gregory P. Conners, MD, MPH, MBA, FAAP, FACEP

Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital

Coleen K. Cunningham, MD

UC Irvine, Children's Hospital of Orange County

John M. Cunningham, MD

University of Chicago

Stephanie Davis, MD

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Stephen Daniels, MD, PhD

University of Colorado School of Medicine

Phyllis A. Dennery, MD

Brown University

Sherin Devaskar, MD

University of California, Los Angeles David Geffen School of Medicine

Terence S. Devries, MD, MPH

Beaumont Health & Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine

Michael Donnelly, MD

Georgetown University School of Medicine

David Deutsch, MD

University of Illinois Rockford

Patricia J. Emmanuel, MD

University of South Florida

Glenn Fennelly, MD, MPH

Paul L. Foster School of Medicine

Orlando Torres Fernadnez, MD

Ponce Health Sciences University School of Medicine

Glenn Flores, MD

University of Miami Miller School of Medicine and Holtz Children's Hospital

John G. Frohna, MD, MPH

CAMC/West Virginia University School of Medicine - Charleston Division

Joseph St. Geme, III, MD

University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine

Morris Gessouroun, MD

University of Oklahoma College of Medicine

Angelo P. Giardino, MD, PhD

University of Utah

Catherine M. Gordon, MD, MS

Texas Children's Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine

David Gozal, MD, MBA, PhD

University of Missouri

Z. Leah Harris, MD

Dell Medical School - University of Texas at Austin

Meredith Irwin, MD

Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, Ontario

Lucky Jain, MD, MBA

Emory University and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

Jeanne James, MD, MBA

University of Nebraska Medical Center

Leonard R. Krilov, MD

The Children's Hospital at NYU Langone Long Island and NYU Long Island School of Medicine

David A. Margolis, MD

Children's Wisconsin/Medical College of Wisconsin

Jonathan A. McCullers, MD

University of Tennessee Health Science Center and Le Bonheur Children's Hospital

Maroun J. Mhanna, MD, MPH, MBA

Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, Shreveport Louisiana

Joseph P. Neglia, MD, MPH

University of Minnesota

Robert M. Nelson, Jr., MD, MS

University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley

Barbara E. Ostrov, MD

The Bernard & Millie Duker Children's Hospital at Albany Med

Loretta Cordova de Ortega, MD

University of New Mexico

Mary C. Ottolini, MD, MPH, MEd

The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital

Harpreet Pall, MD, MBA, CPE

Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine

Sallie Permar, MD, PhD

Weill Cornell Medicine

Sally Radovick, MD

Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Joan Richardson, MD

The University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston

Bruce Rubin, MD, MS

Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU

Juan C. Salazar, MD, MPH

Connecticut Children's and UConn School of Medicine

Lisa Satlin, MD

Mount Sinai Kravis Children's Hospital

Steven Seidner, MD

The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio

Mary B. Taylor, MD

Children's of Mississippi

Bob Vinci, MD

Boston University School of Medicine

Ellen R. Wald, MD

University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health

Raymond G. Watts, MD

LSU Health New Orleans

Charles R. Woods, MD, MS

University of Tennessee College of Medicine Chattanooga