



PPS-PIDSP Statement on COVID-19 Vaccination in Children

4 February 2022



The Philippine Pediatric Society (PPS) and the Pediatric Infectious Disease Society of the Philippines (PIDSP) reiterate our position fully supporting the Department of Health (DOH) and National Task Force Against COVID-19 (NTF) program of providing COVID-19 vaccination in children 5 to 11 years old. It is alarming that recent reports in media and social media platforms highlighting the views of a few doctors have caused undue fear and have stirred considerable vaccine hesitancy among parents and guardians.

Let us be clear and unequivocal:

COVID-19 disease directly affects children and may lead to serious consequences.

Children 5 – 11 years of age are at risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) is most frequent among children 5-11 years old. Unfortunately, some of us in our practice have already encountered a few pediatric patients with MIS-C, a few of whom have succumbed to the illness. Other post-COVID conditions have also been seen in this age group, including “Long COVID”. Though majority of children infected with SARS-CoV-2 present with asymptomatic or mild disease, MIS-C and post-COVID conditions can and typically occur after asymptomatic or mild infection.

There are also indirect effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children, including worsening of their mental or emotional health, widening of education gaps, decreased physical activity and increased body mass index, decreased routine immunizations, and increase in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

Thus, broad vaccination implementation would reduce the public health burden of COVID-19 in children 5-11 years of age.

Like many regulatory agencies around the world, the Philippine Food and Drug Agency (FDA) has approved the use of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for use in this age group,

after a rigorous and independent review process. Other expert groups such as the Vaccine Expert Panel, the Health Technology Assessment Council (HTAC), PPS, and PIDSP, have reviewed and endorsed COVID-19 vaccination in the same age group after weighing all available evidence on the benefits versus risks of the vaccine.

We highlight the following:

- In the [pivotal trial](#) of the vaccine conducted among children ages 5-11 years, the vaccine was found to be safe and efficacious, having prevented 90.9% of symptomatic COVID-19. No serious adverse events nor deaths were found related to the vaccination.
- After vaccine implementation of approximately 8.7 million doses in children aged 5–11 years in the US in 2021, there were few [reports of adverse events](#) in this age group. Serious adverse events were rarely reported, though local and systemic reactions were reported as expected. Common side effects such as pain at the injection site, fatigue, and headache were mild and brief; these are a normal sign that the body is building protection. There were only 11 cases of myocarditis reported out of the 8.7 million, most of whom had a mild clinical course and have recovered. No deaths have been causally associated to the vaccine.
- [Recent data](#) from US experience also show that 2 doses of the vaccine reduced the likelihood of MIS-C by 91%, and that 95% of children hospitalized for MIS-C were unvaccinated.
- In the [Philippines, as of 23 January 2022](#), more than 123.3 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines were administered. Some 7,633,548 adolescents received at least 1 dose of COVID-19 vaccine. The FDA reported a total of 87,884 suspected adverse reactions from all age groups and of these, only 3.22% were in the pediatric age group. Most (94% out of the 3.22%) of reactions in children were non-serious such as dizziness, vaccination/injection site pain, pyrexia, headache, and increased blood pressure. There were only 2 cases of myocarditis and 1 case of pericarditis reported in adolescent population (out of >7 million vaccinated), though causal

link to the vaccination is being reviewed. Although very rare cases of myocarditis and pericarditis have been observed in this population, the benefits of vaccination still outweigh the risks, because as of 20 January 2022, the DOH has recorded a total of 396,730 COVID-19 cases in the pediatric group. Some 36% of cases were seen among children 15-19 years old, 25% among 10–14-year-old group, and 19% each among the 5-9 -year-old age group and 0-4-year-old age group. **Majority of these cases can now be prevented because our children may now be vaccinated, except for the very young (0-4 years old).**

We therefore reiterate that vaccination is the best way to protect children from COVID-19 and its complications. COVID-19 is now vaccine preventable.

We are glad that as a nation, we are able to extend the protection given to adults and adolescents to now include children as young as 5 years old. Parents and guardians of children aged 5–11 years are enjoined to discuss vaccination with their healthcare provider and obtain their information from reputable sources with the right experience and expertise. We also call on the media to work with us hand in hand in providing scientific evidence-based information. Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent COVID-19. Rest assured that as vanguards of the health of the Filipino child, the PPS and PIDSP will continue to monitor data on vaccine safety, efficacy, and effectiveness, and will provide updates as needed to guide COVID-19 vaccination recommendations in children.