



# Covid-19 Vaccination of Children: What Will You Do?

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**Opinion**

**Volume 5 Issue 4**

**Received Date:** July 10, 2021

**Published Date:** July 22, 2021

**DOI:** 10.23880/nhij-16000243

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in March 2021, the United States (U.S.) had over 30 million cases and 547,296 deaths. A lot of change has occurred that is continuing to scar the emotions, affect, behavior, and mental psyche of everyone. Socialization and peer interactions are an important developmental milestone in school-age children (APA, 2021). Internationally, approximately 90% or 1-5 billion enrolled school-age children have been out of education due to the pandemic closures or restrictions (Lee). Covid-19 has led to adverse outcomes in communities with destruction, aggression or anxiety in people, deaths, grief, anxiety, depression, fear, and possible future long-term impacts that are still yet to be fully determined. A study by Brooks et al., found loss or limitations experienced by children are contributing to increased stress, fear, sedentary lifestyles, increasing obesity, depression, aggressive behaviors, substance abuse, suicides, boredom, cyberbullying, abuse, neglect, and family financial crisis.

The CDC reports approximately 4.03 million children have tested positive for Covid-19, representing about 14% of all cases. In June 2021, the CDC reported children (5-17 years) account for less than 10% of all Covid-19 cases, a rate of 5.358/100,000 children in the population. There have been 119 total childhood deaths in age 0-4 years and 267 ages 5-18 years (CDC). Over 324 million doses of the Covid-19 vaccine has been given in the U.S. since December 2020 (CDC) with about 77 million people in the U.S. receiving at least one dose of the Covid-19 vaccine. As of July 2, 2021, 44% of children in the U.S. 15-16 years old have received at least one Covid-19 vaccine dose, with 35.2% are fully vaccinated (CDC). In children ages 12-15 years 31.5% have received at least one vaccine dose and 22.5% are fully vaccinated (CDC). Although children are a vulnerable population with limited immune systems, only 1-3% of children have been hospitalized with a death rate of only 0%-0.03% in 43 states reporting (AAP).

After rapid vaccine trials in March of children, in May 2021, the CDC and World Health Organization approved, recommended, and supported the administration of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine to children over 12 years of age. Although, beginning in April 2021, adverse vaccine side effects, such as pericarditis and myocarditis have been reported (CDC). The pericarditis and myocarditis vaccine adverse side effects reported were mostly found in males, 12-16 years of age and after the second Covid-19 vaccine dose, which if not recognized or treated could lead to blood clots, heart failure, or even death. Today, the CDC continues to site that the benefit of receiving the Covid-19 vaccine in children over 12 years of age outweighs the risks. Accuracy of the Data for the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) may also be delayed at least 4-6 weeks or even underreported impacting accuracy.

Nurses are a trusted profession with the unique position to help children and families through advocacy and providing factual evidence based practice guidelines to allow informed consent in each individual situation about vaccine administration and disease prevention in our children who hold our future. Handwashing, adequate hours of sleep, a well-balanced diet, and exercise/activities aid in promoting childhood wellness supported by evidence.

I believe that children are a blessing and gift from God. We have one life and each family should look at the evidence, involve their children, consult with their healthcare providers, and decide about childhood Covid-19 vaccination individually. The U.S. is a democracy with autonomy, which means families should be provided the facts and allowed to make their own healthcare decisions related to vaccinations without governmental influence with the science available. What will you do about vaccinating your children for Covid-19?

