

A Pediatrician Parent on Young Kids and COVID

This week Pfizer-BioNTech requested an emergency use authorization (EUA) for its Covid-19 vaccine for children ages six months to five years. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has been asked to review data covering the safety and effectiveness of two doses of the vaccine for the younger age group, given three weeks apart.

Currently children under five are the only group in the U.S. ineligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. OSF HealthCare pediatrician Dr. Michael Endris, who is also a father of three children under five years old, is optimistic a EUA approval would help bring an end to a disturbing trend.

“We will anxiously await the data here, hopefully in the next month or two regarding these early vaccines for these younger kids,” Dr. Endris said. “We have unfortunately seen more and more hospitalizations in this age range. But hopefully in the coming months, we'll see things improve.”

The FDA's advisory group is scheduled to meet on February 15 to give guidance on the EUA request, and a definitive answer could come by the end of the month.

Until then, many parents are looking for the safest way to go about daily life during a pandemic with young, unvaccinated children. Dr. Endris says to evaluate each opportunity and outing, but to allow children to participate in activities when deemed safe and appropriate.

“Have a conversation with your physician or your pediatrician if you have concerns,” he recommended. “Our youngest child actually has an immuno-compromising condition, so we kind of err a little bit more on the safe side, but we still let our kids participate in activities when appropriate. Ideally, it's easier if they're outdoors and able to do that, but in the winter, that's not the case. So we just kind of pick our couple of activities that we enjoy, and you know, mask up and go to the library for instance.”

When it comes to wearing masks, young children can often have a difficult time adjusting. Dr. Endris says practice will help. He suggests parents have kids practice wearing a mask at home for short periods of time to get used to the feeling of wearing one. He also reminds parents that modeling safe behavior can certainly make an impact on how kids react to changes like masking in public.

“We should always try to set a good example for our kids in every aspect of our life, especially with being safe during a pandemic. So, when we wear masks ourselves, our kids look at that and see a role model in our parents and hopefully learn to practice safe distancing and masking when appropriate.”

In the end, parenting during a pandemic is no easy task. From navigating changing guidelines and constant quarantines, to making tough decisions about participating in outings and gatherings, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Dr. Endris says just keep plugging along – we are all doing our best.

“It's just kind of a learning process for all of us, and we're just hoping we're doing as best as we can and trying to raise resilient, independent kids,” he said.

Dr. Endris continued, “I would just say that this too shall pass; this isn't forever. And, you know, we do what we can to get by while being safe, and eventually we'll come out on the other side.”

If you are looking for a pediatrician for your child, visit osfhealthcare.org and click “Find a Doctor.”