

Dear

Now that the COVID-19 vaccine has been authorized for use in anyone ages 5 and older, I'd like to take the opportunity to share my thoughts about the vaccine with you. I hope this information will help you make the decision to vaccinate yourself or your eligible children. The vaccine is the safest and most effective way to end the pandemic.

If you or your kids have already been vaccinated, congratulations! The more people who get vaccinated the faster we all can get back to normal.

If you are still trying to decide if you or your kids should get the vaccine, please think about this information.

We have three COVID-19 vaccines approved or authorized for use now - Pfizer BioNTech (Comirnaty), Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson/Janssen. These vaccines are exceedingly effective in preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19, even with the highly contagious Delta variant. Since February 1, 2021, Utahns who are unvaccinated are at a:

- 8.4 times greater risk of dying from COVID-19,
- 7.1 times greater risk of being hospitalized due to COVID-19, and
- 3.5 times greater risk of testing positive for COVID-19 than Utahns who chose to get vaccinated.

Despite what you may have heard, kids do get COVID-19. In fact, just more than 104,000 Utah children ages 0-17 have been diagnosed with COVID-19 during the pandemic. Of these children, almost 90% (n=93,592) were school-aged (5-17 years old). More than 900 kids have been sick enough to need treatment in the hospital. And 104 of them have developed a rare, but serious, condition known as MIS-C that is related to COVID-19.

I know you've probably heard stories or rumors that may make you nervous about vaccinating yourself or your children. Some of these rumors are deliberate attempts to misinform you. Others are just flat-out false.

Here are the facts:

- The vaccines are safe and effective. Some people will develop side effects, but these are usually short-lasting and minor (like pain, redness, or swelling where they got the shot, or other flu-like symptoms). You can find more information about side effects in the information that came with this letter.
- The vaccines were developed using decades of research and the vaccine manufacturers followed the same process that is used to approve other vaccines. The vaccines were developed quickly by cutting red tape, not by cutting corners. The FDA gave full approval to the Pfizer vaccine (Comirnaty) for people 16 and older on August 23, 2021. This is the final step in a rigorous approval process to confirm the vaccine's safety and effectiveness. The vaccine is available for people ages 5-15 years through the FDA emergency use authorization.

- The COVID-19 vaccines won't give you or your child COVID-19. This common concern is simply not true. The vaccines do not contain any "live virus" and cannot give you COVID-19.
- The vaccines have not been linked to infertility or miscarriages. There is absolutely no data to suggest this rumor is true.
- Even if you or your child has had COVID-19 in the past they should still get vaccinated. Research shows that natural immunity from having COVID-19 may not last as long or be as effective as immunity from the vaccines, especially with the Delta variant.

Getting vaccinated not only protects you, but it also protects everyone around you - grandparents, other family members, neighbors, friends, teachers, and others who can't be vaccinated for one reason or another.

If you have further questions please call my office, or visit [coronavirus.utah.gov/vaccine](https://coronavirus.utah.gov/vaccine). You can find flyers, videos, handouts, posters, fact sheets, graphics, and FAQs in more than 30 languages.

COVID-19 vaccines are free and widely available at hundreds of vaccine locations across the state, including for walk-in and after hours appointments. You can find more information on scheduling a vaccine appointment at <https://coronavirus.utah.gov/vaccine-distribution>.

Best regards,