Survey: Less than half of parents likely to have children receive COVID vaccine

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Less than half of parents reported that they are likely to have their children receive a COVID-19 vaccine, according to a new survey of 1,745 parents.

The national survey conducted from February to March also found that a child's doctor was a key, trusted source of information about COVID vaccines. The researchers concluded that pediatric health care providers "have a major role in promoting and giving COVID-19 vaccination for children."


Results showed 28% of parents were very likely and 18% were somewhat likely to have their child receive the vaccine. One-third were very unlikely, 9% were somewhat unlikely and 12% were unsure.

Vaccine safety and side effects were their chief concerns.

Methods, demographics

In the representative online sample, parents were asked child-specific questions for up to three children in the household. They were polled about their own likelihood of getting a COVID vaccine, whether the child had received a flu vaccine in the past two influenza seasons, their levels of trust in sources about COVID vaccines, and their trust in the COVID-19 vaccine development and approval process.
The 1,745 parents who responded provided data on 3,759 children: 40% of children were 11-18 years old, 36% were 5-10 years and 24% were younger than 5 years.

While there were variations in results by race-ethnicity, the disparities disappeared when the study controlled for other parent and child factors.

Parents own receipt of or plan to receive COVID vaccine was the most important factor independently associated with the likelihood of the child getting vaccinated. Other parental factors were a bachelor's or higher education and Democratic affiliation.

A child's prior flu vaccination and parental trust in the child's doctor, social media and the vaccine approval process also were associated with the likelihood of the child getting COVID vaccine.

**Trust in sources**

Respondents said their child's doctor was the most trusted source of information about the vaccine. While 72% of parents said they completely or mostly trust their child's doctor, less than half said they completely or mostly trust their local health department, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the AAP, or the vaccine approval and development process.

Researchers noted that an encouraging finding was that despite high levels of hesitancy, many parents want to "wait and see." They may become more interested in the vaccines over time, as results of trials are released and more parents and older children are vaccinated.

**Need for outreach**

"Strong outreach is needed to address vaccine hesitancy for both parents and children, including targeted educational efforts to parents who want to 'wait and see’ about the vaccines for children," researchers concluded.

They said clear messages and transparent communications are needed from public health, government and leaders about vaccine safety for children, as well as public education on the rigorous development and approval process.

Pediatric providers should communicate about COVID-19 vaccines for children during routine office visits, they said, even before the vaccines are approved for younger children. The report includes multiple suggestions for effective ways to communicate with families.

Children accounted for 19% of new COVID cases in the week of July 22-29, according to data from the AAP and Children's Hospital Association. In total, more than 4.19 million children have been diagnosed with COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic and 358 have died.

**Resources**

- AAP COVID-19 Interim Guidance
- Children and COVID-19 Vaccination Trends (as of July 28)
- AAP News article "Survey: Communication with parents can boost COVID-19 vaccinations in children"
- COVID-19 information from CDC
Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org on preparing children and adolescents for COVID-19 vaccination