



# INDEPENDENCE

## Advisory Board of Health

### Advisory Board of Health Members

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November 16, 2021

RE: Support of Pediatric Vaccinations in Our Community

Mayor and Members of the Council,

The Independence Advisory Board of Health (BOH) is a body created by the Independence City Charter with members appointed by the Independence City Council. Its purpose is to advise the City Manager, Department of Health, and City Council on matters pertaining to public health.

The BOH recognizes that the pandemic is not over and that vaccinations are a key part in our fight against COVID. Although city and county governments have discontinued mandated masking and both hospitalizations and the number of deaths due to COVID have decreased slowly in the KC Metro area in the last few weeks, COVID-19 case numbers have been increasing. Those contracting the virus are younger than those stricken early in the pandemic. They may get very ill but sometimes not sick enough to require hospitalization. COVID cases have increased by 50% in Missouri in recent weeks and are increasing in 16 other states.<sup>1</sup> Our City's reports demonstrate that there has been a 20% increase in the COVID case rate in Independence during the last two weeks. The increased 14-day case rate and percent positivity rate both indicate



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higher risk of transmission in schools.<sup>2</sup> COVID-19 was the second most common cause of death in the US in September.<sup>3</sup>

Although COVID-19 infrequently is fatal in children, it has killed over 630 American children (143 of them between the ages of 5 and 11) and has infected over 6.2 million children, resulting in approximately 8,600 hospitalizations. Among children age 1-14, COVID-19 was in the top 10 leading causes of death through August and September 2021. Among children age 5-14, COVID-19 ranked as the sixth leading cause of death during that same time period.<sup>4</sup> Half of children infected with COVID have reported symptoms of “Long-COVID” 120 days after the illness, including fatigue, muscle pain, headaches, insomnia, respiratory problems, and heart palpitations. Additionally, some children may suffer long-term issues after an infection, including Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (severe inflammation of internal organs) and permanent scarring of the lungs.<sup>5</sup> During June 20–July 31, 2021, the hospitalization rate among unvaccinated adolescents (aged 12–17 years) was 10.1 times higher than that among fully vaccinated adolescents.

Children given the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines had side effects similar to those experienced by people age 16 and older but occur less frequently. The most commonly reported side effects include:

- Pain where the shot was given
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Fever

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- Joint pain
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Nausea
- Decreased appetite

Similar to adults, children have side effects within 2 days after vaccination that typically last 1 to 3 days. More children reported these side effects, except for injection site pain, after the second dose of the vaccine. However, some people have no side effects. Over 1 million doses of vaccine have been given to children so far. The incidence of serious or long-term side effects is rare and less common than if a child had contracted Covid-19. <sup>6</sup> To this point there have been no cases of myocarditis in children 5 to 11 who receive the vaccine. <sup>7</sup>

We recognize that preventing COVID-19 infections not only prevents needless illness, it also allows children to avoid quarantine and stay in school. The pandemic is not over and efforts to contain the disease and protect the members of our community must continue.

The BOH asks that residents continue to use social distancing, stay at home when sick, wear a mask when in groups, and get vaccinated. The numbers of cases, hospitalizations and COVID-related deaths in our city are still indicative of a pandemic. We should be thoughtful with our response and encourage our neighbors to remain vigilant. We were able to conquer polio, smallpox, measles, mumps etc. through intelligent efforts to respond to those diseases and have made our community much better because of these vaccination efforts. Cooler weather drives activities indoors and many countries are already seeing increases in COVID cases related to the relaxation of preventative measures and an increase in unprotected social gatherings.



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The overall vaccination rate continues to slowly climb as citizens recognize that the vaccine is safe and effective but the vaccination of young adults and children is lagging. Children, ages 5-11, can now be vaccinated which will help limit the spread of the disease, protect our children and help the community as a whole.

The BOH strongly encourages parents to engage with their pediatrician or primary health care provider about the decision to get their children vaccinated. The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommends parents vaccinate their children age 5 and above as does our regional pediatric hospital, Children's Mercy. The BOH also recommends that parents vaccinate all children age 5 and above. Pediatric vaccinations are now available through pediatrician offices, pharmacies, some local health departments as well as Children's Mercy Hospital. As the holidays approach and we see fewer masks in the community, it places even more importance upon vaccinations to protect the community by increasing the percentage of the population with improved immune responses.

1 Johns Hopkins Corona Virus Resource Center <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/new-cases-50-states/missouri>

2 Department of Health Independence, MO

3 Peterson Center on Healthcare and KFF (Kaiser Family Foundation) <https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/brief/covid19-and-other-leading-causes-of-death-in-the-us/>

4 Peterson Center on Healthcare and KFF (Kaiser Family Foundation) <https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/brief/covid19-and-other-leading-causes-of-death-in-the-us/> 5 New Sci. 2021 Feb 27; 249(3323): 10–11. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7927578/>

5 Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/misc-in-kids-covid-19/symptoms-causes/syc-20502550>

6 Healthy Children.org <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/What-side-effects-might-my-child-have-after-a-COVID-19-vaccine.aspx>

7 The Harvard Gazette <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2021/11/pediatrician-weighs-in-on-covid-vaccines-for-kids-5-11/>