

**Update on COVID-19**  
**Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of Health**  
**November 17, 2021 at 10:30 a.m.**  
**Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.**

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- Thank you Mayor Tory, and good morning.
- You've just heard from the Mayor some of the details about the "where" and the "how" we will be vaccinating children aged 5 to 11 years old across the city.
- I would now like to talk about the "why". Why should parents of young children get their children vaccinated as soon as possible?
- As the Mayor indicated, approximately 66 per cent of respondents to our survey of parents and caregivers on five to 11 year-old COVID-19 vaccination are certain, or very likely to get their children vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as they're able to do so.
- While it's great to hear that the majority of parents and caregivers are ready and eager to ensure their kids have the best protection – the best tool – we have against COVID-19, I know that there are some parents who have some questions.
- Today I will address some of those questions and I hope even allay some of the concerns that have been expressed.
- First – are the vaccines safe?
- Doctors and scientists around the world are confident in the long-term safety of the COVID-19 vaccines for several reasons.

- First, contrary to some of the myths that have been circulating, mRNA is not new vaccine technology. In fact, scientists have been studying and working with mRNA vaccines for decades and have found no known long-term negative effects.
- You can should also be confident in the measures and safeguards that Canada has in place. For starters, there is the rigorous study that Health Canada conducts in order for a vaccine to be approved for use in the first place.
- And even after a vaccine is approved and put into use, Canada’s ongoing safety monitoring system ensures safety both in the short-term and in the long-term.
- So, you can be confident in this process – as confident as you have when giving any other vaccination to our children. I also ask you to consider the long-term risks of a COVID-19 infection – both for your child and for any other family members with whom they might be in contact.
- In the data submitted by Pfizer to Health Canada, the vaccine is reported to have a 90 per cent efficacy rate in children five to 11 years of age. Vaccine also offers protection to children with chronic diseases and who are at risk for severe COVID-19 disease.
- Parents and caregivers may also worry about any side effects the vaccines may cause. At Toronto Public Health, we've heard a host of questions from parents and caregivers in the town halls and question and answer sessions that we have conducted to date.
- Clinical trial data shows that most COVID-19 vaccine side effects in children will be mild, similar to those for adults, and usually resolve in one to three days. Soreness in the injection site is the most common side effect, followed by some fatigue and headache.
- In the clinical trials, few serious adverse events were reported by participants and none of these events were related to the vaccine itself.

- Vaccines do not impact fertility, they do not impact genetic material or DNA, and they do not impact hormone levels.
- It's true that myocarditis and pericarditis have been observed in youth and young adults, particularly amongst males following the administration of mRNA vaccines. However, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization characterizes these as rare, occurring in 0.01 per cent to less than 0.1 per cent of vaccine recipients.
- Public Health Ontario has indicated that the reported cases of myocarditis and pericarditis following mRNA COVID-19 vaccine administration is 24.2 per 1 million doses of vaccine administered in Ontario.
- They also report that most cases of myocarditis and pericarditis in Ontario in 12 to 17 year olds see symptoms improve quickly with rest and treatment.
- Compare that to a recent estimate from the United States which indicated that as many as 450 in one million young men aged 12 to 17 develop myocarditis or pericarditis following COVID-19 infection.
- To date, no cases have been observed in pediatric clinical trials with five to 11 year-olds, but all the same, this will be closely monitored in children.
- What can cause long-term impact on a child's health – and the health of other members of their household – is contracting COVID-19. We now know that the virus can cause long-term damage to the lungs and other organs, as well as many other complications.
- This is called post-COVID-19 syndrome, or long COVID, and it's one of the reasons why doctors across the globe recommend getting vaccinated.
- The best protection against COVID-19 is for everyone in the household to get vaccinated and this holds true for children five to 11 years old when the vaccine becomes available for them.

- Toronto residents as you've just heard, have shown their commitment to vaccination and the protection that it provides. We should be proud, Toronto should be proud, that we have reached the milestone of having 85 per cent milestone of those who are eligible having received two doses of vaccine.
- As the largest city in Canada and fourth largest in North America, Toronto has the highest fully vaccinated rate for its entire population when compared to other major metropolitan centres such as New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago and London, England.
- So when vaccine becomes available for 5 to 11 year-olds, let's ensure that they too have the best protection against COVID-19.
- It's the best protections for them, for their friends and their families, and for our community. This is really the best way that all of us to can return to the many aspects of life that we have missed so much since COVID-19 became a part of it.

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