



The WHALE Study Family Newsletter November | 19th | 2021

Circle circle, dot dot, time to get the COVID shots!

As you may know, scientists completed clinical trials and determined the Pfizer-BioNTech version of the COVID-19 vaccine is [safe for children as young as 5 years old!](#) Children ages 5-11 can receive age-appropriate doses (about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the adult dose) using smaller needles. These vaccines are offered for **free** regardless of immigration or health insurance status. You can ask your child's pediatrician, pharmacy, search [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) or text your zip code to 438-829 to find a location.

Though we know these vaccines can help protect your family and others, children may still be nervous. Ask your children how they feel about the vaccine and what they might already know. It's more common for kids to fear the needle itself than the vaccine. Despite instincts to provide comfort, jumping to reassure your child may make them feel like their feelings are wrong. Ask questions or encourage them to share so you can fully understand what they are worried about.

There are videos and books designed to teach children about these experiences and encourage their bravery! The principles of exposure therapy teach us that being exposed to reminders of things that scare us, while in a safe environment, can decrease our fear. Further, learning about what to expect can help children feel more prepared and in control.

Talk about the setting: familiar pediatrician's office, pharmacy, somewhere new. Invite your child to bring a comfort item (stuffed animal, toy) from home. Some kids appreciate knowing what they might experience [after the shot or the next day](#): sore arm, feeling tired or achy, or chills. Encourage children to drink lots of water to reduce side effects. Ask your provider about child-friendly dosage for over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medication (e.g., Children's Motrin or Tylenol) to soothe their discomfort. *Note:* Pain-relieving medication is NOT recommended *before* the COVID-19 vaccine as it may interfere with effectiveness.

Staying calm about the experience models for children there isn't anything to worry about. Avoid talking about any negative experiences you've had or heard about. But be honest about shots: It may hurt, like a pinch, for just a few seconds. Remind kids they've had lots of vaccines before.

Some kids may do better without knowing in advance because their worries will escalate. In the case of COVID-19 vaccines where two shots are required, this approach may backfire when it's time for their second shot.

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Check out the page below for [vaccine](#) and [community](#) resources!

Click [here](#) to tell us what topics you want covered in future newsletters!



Please reach out if you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding The WHALE Study or the COVID-19 situation. Staff can be reached by call, text, or email: whalestudy@unc.edu | 919-914-0588
Find us on Twitter: [@circlelab_unc](#), Instagram: [circlelab_unc](#), and [Facebook!](#)
Newsletter written by Dr. Ilana S. Berman and formatted by Dominique N. Martinez

Being open and honest with children helps build their trust. If your child is prone to worrying, the recommended long-term approach is to introduce topics at a neutral and calm time, and not *too far* in advance.

At the visit, comfort or hold your child. Let them have a sweet treat before the shot; this can decrease their pain response (and increase happiness!). Be ready to distract them (use positive imagery or something else entirely like jokes). Praise your child for being brave to face their fear and getting through it (no matter their reaction). And be sure to celebrate after!

REMINDERS

***Reminder:** Please refer your friends if they have a 4-6-year-old and you think they would be interested in participating in the WHALE study. For every eligible family that you refer to us, you will receive \$10! Email us at whalestudy@unc.edu or call/text us at 919-914-0588 with their information.*

VACCINE + COMMUNITY RESOURCES (CLICK BLUE LINKS)

- More information from: [The CDC](#) and [News & Observer](#) including info from UNC providers
- For kids:
 - [Vaccine Activity Book \(from CHOP\)](#)
 - Books: Berenstain Bears Go to the Doctor (Stan Berenstain), [Sammy the Shot](#) (Joan Morgenstern), and [7 more recommendations!](#)
 - <https://www.romper.com/p/7-books-to-get-your-kid-comfortable-with-getting-vaccinated-17607>
 - Video: [What to expect at your COVID-19 vaccination appointment](#)

*Remember to search for books at your local library or free read alouds on YouTube!

HOUSING

- [Durham Continuum of Care \(CoC\)](#)
- Eviction Information: 216-965-5095
- [Durham Rescue Mission](#)
 - 919-688-9641
- [Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness](#)
- [Urban Ministries of Durham](#)
- [Durham County Social Services](#)
- [Orange County Social Services](#)
- [Wake County Social Services](#)

HEALTH & SAFETY

- [Compass Center for Women and Families](#)
 - 919-929-7122
- [Durham Crisis Response Center](#)
 - 919-403-9425
- [InterAct Family Safety and Empowerment Center](#)
 - 919-828-7501
- [Orange County Rape Crisis Center](#)
 - 866-935-4783 (call) , 919-504-5211 (text)
- [Freedom House](#)
 - 919-967-8844 (Crisis Unit, Chapel Hill)
 - 1-877-967-8844 (Mobile Service)
- [Suicide prevention lifeline](#): 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Hope4NC Helpline: 1-855-587-3463
- [Crisis Text Line](#): Text HOME to 741 741

FOOD & GROCERIES

- [Wake County Public Schools Free Meals](#)
- [Durham County Public Schools Free Meals](#)
- [Orange County Food Resources](#)
- [Chapel Hill/Carrboro Schools](#)
- [TABLE](#)
- [Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina](#)
- [Wake County Food Resources](#)
- [No Kid Hungry NC](#) - Text FOODNC or COMIDA to 877-877 to receive information about 3 drive-thru or pickup sites with meals for kids closest to you

CHILDCARE

- [NC Hotline for Critical Workers Seeking Child Care Options](#)
- [Covid Childcare Co-op Creator](#)
- [Covid Urgent Childcare](#)
- [Child Care Services Association](#)

LEARNING

- [Scholastics Learn at Home](#)
- [Khan Academy](#)
- [PBS Kids](#)
- [CDC Tips for Talking with Children about COVID-19](#)