



Getting Your Shot

We asked our doctor friends at LSU Health New Orleans to respond to some questions about the Covid-19 vaccine from one of our Teen Advisory Council members who recently turned 16. We figured you all would appreciate reading what they shared with us!

Q What's your advice for a young person who is reluctant to get the Covid-19 vaccine because they just recently turned 16 and are unsure if the vaccine is safe for them?

So, you just turned 16 a couple of days or months ago and not only can you get a driver's license, but you are now eligible to receive the Covid-19 vaccine. Yikes!! So many things to process, right? Before you get overwhelmed, let's talk about how the vaccine can help create normalcy in your life. The Covid-19 pandemic has been a challenge to the way everyone interacts in their daily activities—from being in the classroom to going to the mall, sports games, festivals, and even Mardi Gras! Let's face it, getting back to normal is essential. In addition to proper hand washing, social distancing, and wearing a mask, the Covid-19 vaccine is our best weapon to allow for this. Although Covid-19 causes more problems in at-risk people and the elderly, teens can get it as well. Also, if you are exposed to an infected person, you have to isolate yourself for a long period of time. The vaccine is effective and safe and approved for use in teens 12 and older. Why 12 you ask? Because this was the age that was included in the clinical studies to test for safety and effectiveness of the vaccine. Research has shown that there are no serious side effects from the Covid-19 vaccine.

Q Why is it important to still wear a mask when vaccinated?

After vaccination, the chance of contracting Covid-19 as a young person is very small. We are still learning about the different variants of the virus, but if you are fully vaccinated, it is OK to resume some normal activities like we did before the pandemic. You should still follow the guidelines of the location that you are in because some may still require a mask. This includes schools, healthcare facilities, and public transportation. Masks do protect against spread, especially for those who might have the virus without any symptoms.

Q Can a small group of friends have a hangout without masks if all are vaccinated?

Yes! You are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after you receive either the two-dose series or single-dose vaccine. Once you are fully vaccinated, according to the CDC, you can visit with people indoors as well as participate in outdoor activities and recreation without a mask. Precautions should still be taken to cover coughs and sneezes and to frequently wash your hands. Well-fitting masks should be worn as directed by your school, doctor's office, and even some businesses in our community.

The risk of Covid-19 infection is minimal to the fully vaccinated person, and there is a low risk of transmitting the virus to others. However, if you develop symptoms, regardless of vaccination status, you should be evaluated by a physician and get tested.

Q Is it safe for teens 15 or younger to get the vaccine?

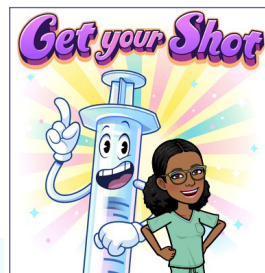
When medical research is being done, companies choose criteria for enrollment. One such criterion can be the age for participation. At the time of the original Covid-19 vaccine studies, 16 years of age was chosen to allow for the adult trials to be completed first, since that population was at greatest risk for severe disease. At the time of the vaccine rollout, companies were already studying the 12-15-year-old population and this group now has access to the vaccine as well! The Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine was recently approved for ages 12-15. The age guidelines are set forth by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which is the federal agency that oversees the safety of the trials and vaccine production.

By being fully vaccinated, you serve as an example to others who may be hesitant about the vaccine. You can share your experience with others and tell them why it is important to get vaccinated and maybe bring a family member to get vaccinated as a source of support! Remember, we are all in this together!!!

As teens in your community who have an interest in learning about your health and well-being (that is why you are reading this!), it is critical to speak to your friends about the vaccine. Accurate information is the key and needs to be shared throughout our neighborhoods, schools, churches, and communities. Peer support for the vaccine can be more powerful than information that is presented from other sources. So, get the word out that the vaccine is safe and will help us build a healthy community with the ability to fight back against Covid-19. Encourage your family members to get vaccinated. Reach out to local physicians for details or to your closest hospital to learn more about their vaccine outreach programs.



Stacey L. Holman, MD
LSU Department of OBGYN



LaNasha Tanner, MD
LSU Department of OBGYN

An Elegy for Melodie the Pancake Lady

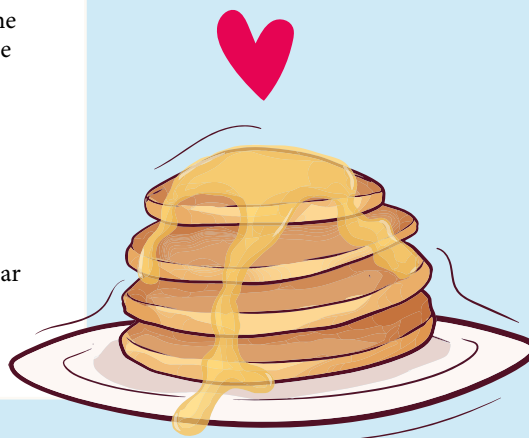
BY Rita Desir

The smell brings me misery
For my heart forever has an injury
They made the mornings less weary
Fresh-flipped, maple-drizzled, oh the sweet memory

Honestly, you inspire me to the highest degree
I try to create them just like you, to remind me
But something's missing, I feel like a wannabe
There's something that only you can see
I'll keep trying for my peace

With you, there is always a smile near
Now maybe a smile and just a little tear
For now you're not here
But I have no fear
The taste of your pancakes remains crystal clear

Because of the love we share
My love for cooking is everywhere.



Rita Desir is an eighth grader at Harriet Tubman Charter School. She wrote this piece to honor her grandmother. She connects with people through food and music and aspires to be a pastry chef and a forensic scientist. Rita's favorite quote to live by is "If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair" by Shirley Chisholm.

