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Let's Vaccinate Everyone Including Our Keiki

By Lynda Dolan, MD

Moms and Dads continue to ask me.... "Should I vaccinate my kids to protect them and others from severe illness or possibly death from COVID-19?" The emphatic answer from pediatric infectious disease doctors, family physicians and pediatricians across the country and absolutely supported by me and my colleagues at Big Island Docs, is YES!! Please vaccinate to protect yourself, your family, and our community!

Why? Sadly, the medical community is seeing children as young as 3 months old in hospitals on ventilators. And where could a 3-month-old get the Covid-19 virus? It is likely that they were exposed to an unvaccinated family member. While this case is extreme, we know that at least 350 children in the U.S. have died from the virus with thousands hospitalized. Adolescents are currently 25% of all reported Covid-19 cases. If we want our kids to have a happy and fulfilling future they need to stay in school, participate in sports and extracurricular activities and spend time with family and friends. The vaccine will help us ensure our children continue positive development into adulthood.

And more good news is here! After vigorous & successful clinical trials/testing on thousands of children aged 12-15, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) just approved and the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Academy of Family Medicine support Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine for children 12 years and older.

But parents still ask me..... is the vaccine safe? I can tell you...yes, definitely! Why do I know? First, the vaccine has been tested on this age group with no adverse effects. And while our scientists had to quickly develop the vaccine to stop worldwide death and illness misery, I can assure you that not one test, trial or quality process was skipped. The vaccine went through all the required, routine checks. It is safe!

And even better news... studies show that vaccinated pregnant and lactating mothers can pass protective immunity to their unborn through the placenta and to newborn infants through their breast milk.

The vaccine is so safe, experts believe that with a bit more testing, the vaccine could be approved by year end for all age groups. As one of my colleagues said, if vaccinations work for measles, mumps, whooping cough, and polio, we should be rushing to vaccinate and protect our most cherished keiki from this deadly virus.

Big Island Docs, formerly East Hawaii Independent Physicians Association, the largest network of private sector physicians on Hawai'i Island, strongly recommends that individuals of all ages get vaccinated. Unvaccinated individuals are at high risk for being infected by rapidly spreading COVID-19 variants. It is important to recognize that in our community, the individuals who tested positive, were hospitalized, or died from COVID-19 shared one thing in common- THEY WERE NOT VACCINATED.

We should feel fortunate in our community to have access to the vaccines in multiple locations even on weekends thanks to many different entities including pharmacies, hospitals, federally qualified health centers both small and large. There are many countries and communities around the world where vaccines are not available causing much misery and many deaths. My entire family- my husband, three children in school, elderly mother and myself are vaccinated. Kudos to Hawaii Island parents as you make these important decisions. If you have further questions or are looking for a vaccination site, please contact your medical provider, the Hawaii Department of Health (1-(833)-711-0645) or log onto [HawaiiCOVID19.com/vaccine](https://hawaiiCOVID19.com/vaccine). Let's work together get everyone, including our keiki vaccinated!