Pharmacist's Letter
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Clarify Facts About COVID-19 Vaccines for 2025-2026

Changes with 2025-2026 COVID-19 vaccines are causing confusion.

Who should be vaccinated? Continue to discuss COVID-19 vaccination for ages 6 months and up.

Be aware, FDA labels for 2025-2026 COVID-19 vaccines limit use to ages 65 and up...and younger patients at high risk.

But now ACIP has voted to recommend shared clinical decision-making for all patients 6 months and older.

It comes on the heels of numerous medical organizations publishing their own scientific recs...and advocating against limiting access.

For instance, Am Academy of Pediatrics recommends COVID-19 vaccines for all kids 6 to 23 months, and those 2 to 18 years at high risk or whose parent chooses vaccination. Am Academy of Family Physicians also recommends this for kids...plus routine vaccination for adults. And Am College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends vaccination in pregnancy.

Explain MANY patients have a risk factor for severe illness from COVID-19 infection...diabetes, heart or lung disease, obesity, depression, smoking, pregnancy, immunocompromise, etc.

But data show COVID-19 vaccination reduces risk of long COVID, hospitalizations, deaths, adverse pregnancy outcomes from COVID-19, etc.

And despite stronger heart warnings for mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, myocarditis is still rare...about 27 cases per million doses in males 12 to 24 years...and less common and severe than with COVID-19 infection.

Follow your protocol if you vaccinate in-house or at discharge.

If your hospital doesn't stock or administer COVID-19 vaccines, recommend an Rx for patients at discharge...in case the pharmacy needs one.

Which vaccine should be used? All 2025-2026 COVID-19 vaccines will be monovalent. mRNA options (Comirnaty, Spikevax, mNexspike) preferentially target LP.8.1...protein-based Nuvaxovid targets JN.1.

Give any age-appropriate option. For patients 65 years and older, use any product...Comirnaty (Pfizer-BioNTech), Spikevax (Moderna), new mNexspike (Moderna), or Nuvaxovid (Novavax).

But if your hospital treats kids, be aware of nuances. Spikevax can be used starting at 6 months...Comirnaty at 5 years...and mNexspike or Nuvaxovid at age 12.

Keep in mind other differences. For instance, mNexspike targets specific parts of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein...so it's a lower dose (10 mcg/0.2 mL) than Spikevax (50 mcg/0.5 mL).

mNexspike is also being promoted as more effective...especially for ages 65+. But the number needed to vaccinate in this group to prevent one more COVID-19 case is 73 people. And mNexspike costs about $35 more/dose.

See our *COVID-19 Vaccines 2025-26* resource for doses, storage, etc...plus answers to FAQs about safety and effectiveness.

Key References:

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