



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on June 21, 2021

U.K. Unlikely to Recommend COVID-19 Shots to Children Aged 12-17

Children and young adults in the U.K. may be excluded from receiving a COVID-19 Pfizer-BioNTech jab, pending more data from the United States and Israel on its safety, the BBC [reports](#).

Even though the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has [approved](#) the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in children aged 12-15, saying it is safe and effective in this age group and the benefits outweigh any risks, the JCVI must now advise government on whether this age group should be vaccinated as part of the U.K. rollout. A statement from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunization (JCVI) — the government’s key advisory group on vaccines — is expected in the coming days.



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Current advice is that 16- to 18-year-olds can be offered a Pfizer jab if they are in a “priority group” — meaning they have certain [clinical conditions](#) — or live with someone who has a weakened immune system. The committee, it is reported, may be waiting for more safety data on children who have been vaccinated in other countries, such as the United States and Israel, before making its decision.

[Speaking](#) for the government last week, Liz Truss, the U.K. international trade secretary, said she understood that the JCVI would not recommend the vaccination of children under 18. During an interview with *BBC Breakfast*, Truss added that the government would “look very closely at the JCVI’s recommendation” and would make clear its position in due course.

The *Guardian* [reports](#) that some British academics have questioned the rationale of giving vaccines to young children, who, data suggests, are safe from the direct effects of COVID-19. It is also argued that there are more vulnerable people elsewhere in the world who would benefit much more from the vaccines. Other people have suggested that vaccinating children could help prevent outbreaks in schools.

Professor Calum Semple, a member of the government’s Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, said: “The risk of death [from COVID-19 in children] is one in a million. That’s not a figure and plucking from the air, that’s a quantifiable risk.” He added that “We know in wave one and wave two put together there were 12 deaths in children — in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, put together — and that is rare because there are about 13 to 14 million children in the UK.

On the other hand, the government’s former chief scientific adviser and chair of the Independent SAGE [group](#), Sir David King [argued](#) a vaccination program for children over 12 should be rolled out “quickly,” warning that the rising number of cases in the U.K. is evidence of a third wave of the virus.



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The U.K. Office for National Statistics (ONS) data [shows](#) that safety fears are the most common reason for people not getting a coronavirus vaccine. The speed at which the jab has been developed and potential long-term side effects were also among concerns. Another major reason is that many people believe catching COVID-19 does not pose a significant risk to their health — particularly young people and those who believe their immune systems are strong enough to fight the virus without the jab.

Similar concerns were raised in Germany, when a committee on vaccinations, known as Stiko, [recommended](#) that children aged 12 to 15 only receive the shot if they have certain illnesses such as obesity or chronic lung or heart diseases. They further [warned](#) that since vaccine studies on youth were limited, severe side effects of the vaccines “are not to be excluded.”

Just [recently](#), the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has received approximately 800 reports of heart inflammation that may be connected with vaccines that use the messenger RNA technology — the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. The majority of cases reported were in patients under 30. No deaths were reported.

Dr. Cody Meissner, a member of the FDA’s Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee, [expressed](#) concern over the long-term effects of myocarditis on young people earlier this month, warning, “Before we start vaccinating millions of adolescents and children, it’s so important to find out what the consequences are.”

The instances of heart inflammation in the United States are consistent with an [Israeli study](#) released in early June. That study found that “there is a probable link between receiving the second dose of the (Pfizer) vaccine and the appearance of myocarditis among men aged 16-30.” The Israeli report suggested that the link was more prominent in men aged 16-19 than in other groups.

On Sunday, a 13-year-old boy died from heart problems after getting his second dose of Pfizer vaccine, according to a viral [Twitter post](#). “The initial autopsy results (done Friday) were that his heart was enlarged and there was some fluid surrounding it. He had no known health problems. Was on no medications,” Tami Burages wrote, with a photo apparently showing her nephew’s COVID-19 vaccination record card.



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