



**PPS-PIDSP Statement on COVID-19 Vaccines for
Children
7 June 2021**



The Philippine Food and Drug Administration has recently revised its Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine extending its indication to include individuals 12 years of age and older. ¹ This is following the publication of data on the safety, immunogenicity, and efficacy of the BNT162b2 COVID-19 Vaccine in adolescents; results of this trial showed that among 2260 adolescents 12-15 years of age enrolled in the study (1131 received BNT162b2 and 1129 received placebo), no COVID-19 cases were noted among vaccine recipients and 16 cases occurred among placebo recipients with observed vaccine efficacy of 100% (95% CI, 75.3 to 100). The study also demonstrated that BNT162b2 had a favorable safety and side-effect profile, with mostly transient mild-to-moderate reactogenicity (majority being injection-site pain, fatigue, and headache, with no vaccine-related serious adverse events and few overall severe adverse events)². The United States Food and Drug Administration³ (FDA) and the European Medicines Agency⁴ have already approved the use of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in the 12 years and older age group in their jurisdictions. More clinical trial results in the pediatric age group are also expected to be published soon with the other vaccines being evaluated for this age group.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has issued recommendations for COVID-19 vaccination for children and adolescents 12 years of age and older, who do not have contraindications, using any COVID-19 vaccine authorized through EUA by the FDA, recommended by the CDC, and appropriate for their age and health status⁵.

The Philippine Pediatric Society (PPS) and the Pediatric Infectious Disease Society of the Philippines (PIDSP) acknowledge that children may be vaccinated with any duly approved COVID-19 vaccine; however, given the limited vaccine supply, both PPS and PIDSP recommend that the older and more vulnerable age groups be prioritized. Once the country will have adequate vaccine supply, children with co-morbidities may be given precedence for vaccination. Parents should also seek advice from their pediatrician to assess their child's risk from COVID-19 and the benefits of getting vaccinated.

In the Philippines and globally, COVID-19 in the pediatric age group (<19 years old) is less common compared with adults; children are less affected by the disease with an incidence of <10%, while the most vulnerable still belong mostly to the older age group. Prioritization of vaccine recipients in compliance to following the World Health Organization framework should be done⁶. Older age groups should be given precedence in the vaccination roll-out, whilst acknowledging that children will eventually need to be vaccinated to achieve 70% population immunity. More data on the safety profile of the vaccines should also be made available and considered before implementing large-scale pediatric COVID-19 vaccination.

COVID-19 also affects children indirectly, with school closures and other limitations in social engagements that are detrimental to their overall development. Vaccinating the more vulnerable older age groups should, along with other interventions being implemented in the country, eventually lead to decreased viral transmission and a return to normal activities for children, especially when groups that directly contribute to children's well-being (their parents, teachers, and other providers) are vaccinated⁶.

The PPS and PIDSP moreover reiterate the need to improve efforts to immunize children against vaccine-preventable diseases (such as measles and polio) via the National Immunization Program of the Department of Health and other healthcare providers^{7,8}.

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