

Open Letter to Mississippi Parents

Mississippi children have faced many trials and challenges this past year during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have missed in-person learning. They have lost loved ones and family members. They have suffered illness due to COVID-19. We, as pediatricians, pediatric sub-specialists, and family practice physicians, have been there to help families navigate these physical, emotional, financial, and educational challenges.

Now we are thrilled with the announcement on May 12th that the Pfizer vaccine has been approved per the FDA and CDC down to the age of 12. This is welcome news for our high-risk children with diabetes, cancer, asthma, sickle cell, and other chronic medical conditions. But it is also important for ALL children in Mississippi. Vaccinations will allow children to have a more traditional school year this fall. Vaccinations will allow sports teams and extracurricular activities to proceed in a more normal fashion. If your children are fully vaccinated, they will not have to quarantine or get tested if a teammate or classmate tests positive for COVID-19. If most children are fully vaccinated, there will be little need for virtual or hybrid classes; children will have a full-time, live experience in school, which is vital to a good education.

We, as physicians, have been vaccinated because we know the vaccines to be safe and effective. We have vaccinated our own children who are 16 and up for the same reasons. And now that this vaccine has been approved, we will soon be vaccinating our children down to the age of 12. We hope that parents will see our confidence in these vaccines and will help bring this pandemic to an end by vaccinating their children ages 12 and above.

We are so proud of our patients and their families and the resilience and strength they have shown this past year. We are joyful at the prospect of a more normal school year this fall, but we must all prepare now in order to make this hope a reality. Vaccines are available through local pediatric clinics, local family practice clinics, pharmacies and the Mississippi State Department of Health.

Go to https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/14,0,420,976.html#local to find a vaccine provider near you.

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