



Department of Health
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Agency of Education
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August 5, 2021

Dear Vermont parents and guardians:

As we approach a new school year, we wanted to thank you for your extraordinary efforts to keep your children, families and schools safe throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, as the start of the school year approaches, **the best way to stay safe and healthy is to make sure your child is vaccinated if they are age 12 or older.**

You may be hearing a lot about the Delta variant – a mutated version of the COVID-19 virus that is more contagious and is spreading around the U.S. and in Vermont.

Fortunately, COVID-19 vaccines work extremely well at preventing hospitalization and death due to the virus, including the Delta variant. Your child's risk of getting sick goes down dramatically once they are fully vaccinated – and even if they do get sick, symptoms are likely to be much less severe.

The vaccines are safe. We know this from scientific trials, and because hundreds of millions of people in the U.S. – including more than 10 million kids ages 12 to 17 – have been safely vaccinated. Some mild side effects are normal, and more serious side effects are very rare. It may seem like the vaccines were developed quickly, but they are actually made using science that has been used for decades to treat other diseases.

We understand if you still have questions or want more information. If you do, please talk with your child's health care provider or your family doctor to learn more about the vaccines.

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is free, quick and easy, with clinics and pharmacies all over the state providing vaccines without an appointment every day. To find a vaccine clinic near you, please visit healthvermont.gov/MyVaccine. Many health care providers now also offer vaccine in their office, so you can also reach out to your child's provider.

The sooner your child gets a first dose, the sooner they will be closer to full vaccine protection. Your child will not only have a greater chance to be healthy and stay in school safely, but it also helps protect those who can't be vaccinated.

Thank you, and we are here for you when you are ready to get your shot,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Mark Levine'.

Mark Levine, M.D.

Commissioner, Vermont Department of Health

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Dan French'.

Daniel M. French, Ed.D.

Secretary, Vermont Agency of Education