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March 2022

Dear Friends:

The health and safety of your children and our Ramah communities are of paramount importance to us. So many of our routines have been upended the past two years because of the Covid pandemic; school, work, daily activities, synagogue life, gatherings with family and friends, and Ramah camping summers have all been dramatically altered.

All of the Ramah camps were closed the summer of 2020, and last year we successfully ran our camp programs under very strict safety protocols that included rigorous Covid testing and the creation of isolated Ramah community bubbles that excluded many of the activities and programs that are among the core elements of the Ramah experience.

This summer, to the best of our ability, we aim to run as normal a Ramah summer season as possible. The Covid vaccine and boosters are an essential public health component for our communities. The vaccine will enable us to achieve those dual goals—keeping your children healthy, and running a more normal Ramah summer.

We acknowledge that the Covid vaccine (and other routine childhood vaccines) may be a difficult topic of conversation for many, and we respect individuals in their own personal lives to make personal choices in accordance with their own inclinations. However, in the case of creating a safe and healthy Ramah community composed of several hundred children and staff living in very close quarters, the greater public health of the community supersedes those individual preferences. Thus, the requirement that all eligible members of our Ramah communities—campers and staff across the Ramah Camping Movement—are fully vaccinated and boosted against Covid.

There are no guarantees, and certainly the Covid vaccine does not offer perfect immunity. But, it does reduce the severity of disease, hospitalizations, and the transmission of illness. The vaccine and booster provide essential protection and are an invaluable tool that will help us to both keep your children and the larger Ramah communities healthy, and run a successful Ramah summer.

Please see below for some important frequently asked questions about the Covid vaccine, and do not hesitate to contact us with any additional questions or concerns. We would be happy to have a member of our medical team speak with you.

We can't wait to see your children in camp in just a few short months, and are looking forward to a healthy and safe summer that will provide a rich, memorable and full Ramah experience for all.

*Kol Tuv,***National Ramah Medical Committee**

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**NRC Medical Committee**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**  
**Children and the COVID-19 Vaccine**  
**March 2022**

**Source:** <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/FAQs.html>

**How do we know vaccines are safe for kids?**

The COVID vaccine for children has been through rigorous testing and thorough review by the FDA and CDC. The vaccine has been shown to be safe and effective. Children who are fully vaccinated have lower rates of acquiring COVID, less severe symptoms if acquired, lower rates of hospitalizations, and lower rates of mortality. COVID vaccines are the most closely monitored vaccines in U.S. history. And the FDA and CDC will continue to monitor the safety of COVID vaccines, including among children.

**Will vaccinating my child lead to herd-immunity?**

Given the millions of Americans who are still unvaccinated, immunizing younger children is unlikely to bring the country to the “herd immunity” threshold — the point at which virus transmission stalls. Still, vaccinating children may help to curtail virus spread by giving the virus fewer entryways into the Ramah community, and hopefully improve local Ramah community herd-immunity.

**Will Camp require boosters for children < 12 years of age.**

Currently, boosters have not been recommended for children < 12 years of age. A primary series of two vaccines for children 5-12 years of age, and a booster vaccine for those older than 12 years, are required for all those who are eligible to attend a Ramah camp this summer. We will adjust our guidelines should any changes be made to the CDC booster recommendations.

**What are common side effects from COVID vaccines?**

Children who’ve gotten a COVID vaccine have the same common side effects as adults. They are signs that the vaccine is working and that your child’s body is building protection against the virus. These side effects are normal and typically last for a couple days after vaccination.

Common side effects include:

- Pain, redness, or swelling where you got your shot
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Chills
- Fever
- Nausea

**Are the side effects in children different from those in adults?**

For children ages 5 to 11, trial participants experienced only mild side effects, which were typically more frequent after the second dose, the FDA. reported; the most common were pain at the injection site, fatigue and headache.

**What if my child has allergies (e.g., egg, etc.)?**

Children should not get the Pfizer vaccine if they have a history of severe allergic reaction to any ingredient (such as polyethylene glycol) in the vaccine. Allergies to the vaccine ingredients are rare. The vaccine does not contain eggs, preservatives or latex. Please consult your physician for more details.

### **What is the risk of heart problems after the vaccine?**

The number of cases linking the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines to rare heart issues called myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle, and pericarditis, an inflammation of the heart's lining remains exceedingly small, and the conditions appear to be temporary. *Studies have shown that coronavirus itself, which can infect the heart, is much more likely to cause heart problems compared with vaccination.*

**Bottom line: You're more likely to get heart inflammation if you're unvaccinated and get sick with COVID. And heart inflammation from COVID tends to be worse than the heart inflammation people have had after vaccination.**

### **If my child has had COVID, do they need to get vaccinated?**

Yes. You should get your child vaccinated against COVID even if they've already had COVID. Having had COVID doesn't necessarily protect someone against getting infected again. In fact, a recent study found that unvaccinated individuals are more than twice as likely to be re-infected with COVID than those who had COVID and then got vaccinated. Similarly, if one should have a COVID infection after having completed the initial series of vaccines, but before receiving the booster shot, one should still obtain the booster vaccine at its appropriate time.

**If my child recently had COVID, how long do I have to wait to receive a vaccine or a booster.** Even after having COVID, the research still suggests receiving the vaccine, regardless of one's level of antibodies. The antibodies and "protection" from having COVID drop off and do not provide the same long-term protection as the vaccine. The natural immunity and antibodies from past COVID infection do NOT replace the vaccines at decreasing morbidity and mortality for future variants. Overall, the CDC says you should get a COVID vaccine even if you already had COVID – but when your quarantine period has ended and symptoms have resolved. Emerging evidence shows that getting a COVID vaccine after you recover from COVID infection provides added protection to your immune system.

### **Can a child who recently received other vaccinations receive the COVID vaccine?**

The CDC said Covid vaccines and other vaccines could be given during the same visit, without regard to timing. If multiple vaccines are administered during a single visit, the injections may be given in different parts of the body.

### **What do we know about the long-term effects of these vaccines on growing bodies?**

Scientists have data showing the vaccines are safe in children. The mRNA molecule in the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines mimics a natural human process and there is enough information to conclude that the benefits of the vaccine outweighed the risks, even without more long-term safety data.

### **Does the vaccine affect puberty or reproduction?**

No. There is not a biologically plausible reason the vaccine would affect these areas. There is no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID vaccines, can cause female or male fertility problems.

### **Given the low risk of COVID in children, why not wait for more data to have my child vaccinated?**

While children are less likely to develop severe illness from Covid, they are still at risk, and also can spread the virus to vulnerable adults and the rest of the community. While children face a much lower risk of severe outcomes from COVID, they should be vaccinated to protect against possible long-lasting COVID symptoms, hospitalizations.

### **Should my child get the vaccine if she is sick?**

Talk with your child's doctor, but children can usually get vaccinated even if they have a mild illness like a cold, earache, mild fever, or diarrhea. If the doctor says it is okay, your child can still get vaccinated.