
Vaccine Update from Explorer West

Fri, Nov 5, 2021 at 3:04 PM

Dear Explorer West families,

What a week: children ages 5-11 are now eligible to receive the Covid-19 vaccine, an important step for our community in getting to the other side of this pandemic. Hooray! So what now? Here are some questions and answers.

Is Explorer West requiring students to be vaccinated? Yes! As we've communicated since last summer, now that the vaccine is available to all our students, we will be requiring vaccination.

Are exemptions allowed? We will consider medical exemptions supported by your child's doctor. Please contact me if you'd like to discuss an exemption.

What is the timeline for the requirement? Our preliminary timeline is that we would like all students to have received their first dose (or have their medical exemption approved by the school) no later than Jan. 1, 2022, and their second dose by Feb. 1, 2022. Vaccines are readily available now, but we may adjust this timeline if vaccine availability conditions worsen. I encourage you to get started right away!

Where can I get the vaccine for my child? Try your doctor's office first. Here are a couple resources in case you are having a hard time making an appointment:

- [Sea Mar Clinics](#): As of today, there's great availability for walk-ins and appointments for ages 5+ at Burien, Des Moines, Federal Way, Kent, Seattle, and White Center.
- [University of Washington](#): call 844-520-8700 to get on an appointment waitlist.

Can my child miss school to get vaccinated! Absolutely -- just let us know. Early reports are that side effects for this age group are minimal, but if your student is not feeling well enough to attend school the day after a shot, we understand. If, however, they are experiencing a symptom that appears on our screener the day after their shot, but are feeling well enough to participate in school, they are still welcome to attend.

How should we let the school know about our child's vaccination status? Once your child has received their second dose, please bring in or email a copy of their vaccination card for Alex. We may check in sooner to ensure everyone is on track with getting their first dose, but we are not planning to collect documentation until the process is completed. *If your child is already fully vaccinated and you have not yet given us a copy of their vaccination card, please send that to Alex as soon as you can, or come by and let us make a copy of it.*

Once our students are vaccinated, will they still need to wear masks at school? Students will need to wear masks at school (at least indoors) as long as the statewide mask mandate for all schools is still in effect. We expect that high levels of vaccination will continue to drive community infection rates down, which will *ultimately* lead to an end to the mask mandate. Until then, some of our other safety measures may be adapted a little sooner, like requirements around the morning attestation screener, routines for eating lunch, and so on. Furthermore, fully vaccinated students will also have shorter and fewer quarantine requirements if they travel, or if they are in close contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 -- that's good news that we don't need to wait for!

What if my child is about to turn 12? Should we wait to get the larger dose? I'd encourage you to talk with your doctor about that, but the medical consensus seems to be, don't wait more than a couple weeks for a birthday. Interestingly, the dosage guidelines were set (and tested) by maturity of the immune system, not by size or weight. Again, talk with your doctor, but bear in mind the timeline for our requirement.

I found [this article](#), written by epidemiologist Katelyn Jetelina earlier this week, to be an especially helpful analysis of the process used to evaluate the safety and efficacy of the vaccine for children. She also includes great resources at the bottom for families feeling concerned or hesitant about the vaccine.

Thank you all for your patience and support as we reach this powerful turning point! And as always, feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns.

Have a wonderful weekend,
Barbara