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## **For Immediate Release**

*Make a Pfizer vaccine appointment for 12-15-year-olds at [Vaccine.WVUMedicine.org](http://Vaccine.WVUMedicine.org)*

**MORGANTOWN, WV (May 11, 2021)** — Parents and guardians of children ages 12 to 15 are encouraged to make an appointment for a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine following the U.S. Food & Drug Administration’s (FDA) expansion Monday of emergency use authorization (EUA) to that cohort.

Appointments can be made at [Vaccine.WVUMedicine.org](http://Vaccine.WVUMedicine.org) or by calling 833-795-SHOT (833-795-7468) to get the two-dose Pfizer inoculation as early as Friday, May 14. Vaccines are provided through the Greater Monongalia County COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic at the old Sears building in Morgantown Mall.

“This is a great way to protect this age group from COVID-19,” said Dr. Lee B. Smith, MCHD executive director and county health officer. “We know that sometimes, these ‘tweens and young teens are asymptomatic carriers of the virus, so getting them vaccinated is extremely important to keep them from spreading the virus around the community.

“But they also have been known to have symptoms and suffer serious effects as well if they contract COVID. We are currently seeing increasing numbers of COVID cases in school-age kids.”

Opening up another age group for vaccine eligibility also moves Monongalia County as well as the country closer to being able to reach herd immunity of at least 70%.

“That’s the estimation of what proportion of the population needs to be inoculated against COVID-19 to be able to halt the progression of the virus,” Dr. Smith said. “Having the ability to vaccinate another age group will help us reach that goal.”

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According to a press release issued by the FDA, “Parents and guardians can rest assured that the agency undertook a rigorous and thorough review of all available data, as we have with all of our COVID-19 emergency use authorizations,” said Dr. Janet Woodcock, acting FDA commissioner.

Information comes from tests conducted on 2,260 adolescents, with 1,131 receiving the vaccine and 1,129 receiving a saline placebo, according to the FDA.

More than half of the participants were followed for at least two months following the second dose. The most common side effects were similar to those of older individuals: pain at the injection site, tiredness, headache, chills, muscle pain, fever and joint pain. Also, some participants experienced no side effects.

“The protection that is gained by this vaccine is well worth these minor side effects,” Dr. Smith said. “This is especially true as COVID-19 variants are circulating and increasing in Monongalia County.”

Plus, Dr. Smith added, with summer approaching, protection from COVID-19 will be advantageous with any travel plans or group activities that might be on the calendar.

“We understand that everyone, including children, have not had their usual opportunities to see friends and participate in their regular pursuits,” Dr. Smith said. “Giving them this vaccine is the start of getting back to their normal lives.”

As with any other vaccine recipient, the 12-to-15-year-olds must not get the COVID-19 vaccine two weeks before or after getting any other vaccine. The Pfizer vaccine, which is the only one approved for individuals 17 and younger, is a two-dose inoculation administered about three weeks apart.

“This means that anyone needs to be two weeks past their second dose before receiving any other vaccine,” Dr. Smith said. “That’s also the time frame in which they would be considered fully inoculated against COVID-19.”

Also, anyone in this age group must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or an adult in order to get the vaccine, Dr. Smith added.

“We understand that school-aged children do not always have state-issued ID, and so the child’s parent or guardian will consent to their vaccination and vouch for their contact information so they can be contacted for their second vaccine after three weeks,” he said.

Pfizer was originally granted EUA for individuals 16 and older on Dec. 11, 2020. The state of West Virginia extended vaccine eligibility to the general public when Gov. Jim Justice ordered the vaccination of individuals 80 and older on Dec. 30. The age was consistently lowered and for the past month, anyone 16 and older has easily been able to get a vaccine appointment.

More information on the COVID-19 vaccine and the FDA's EUA can be found at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/). More information on the Greater Monongalia County COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic can be found at [monchd.org/testing--vaccines.html](https://monchd.org/testing--vaccines.html).

Finally, Dr. Smith said, “We understand that mask guidance is continually being updated. But for now, it's important that individuals continue to wear masks and follow the other guidelines.”

For up-to-date information on health and wellness in Monongalia County, check out [monchd.org](https://monchd.org) and follow the health department on Facebook and Twitter @WVMCHD and on Instagram at #wvmchd.

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