

Dr. Fauci dismisses concerns about COVID-19 vaccines impacting children's genetics

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Editor's note: For the latest news on COVID-19, visit <http://bit.ly/AAPNewsCOVID19>.

Anthony Fauci, M.D., chief medical adviser to President Joe Biden, dismissed concerns Wednesday that mRNA COVID-19 vaccines could impact children's genetics.

"We're going to be looking at multiple aspects of safety," Dr. Fauci said in response to a reporter's question. "There is really no biological reason at all to indicate or even predict that you would even see any modification of a genetic profile when you're dealing with mRNA, which has no way of integrating into the genome of a cell."

Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna are testing their mRNA COVID-19 vaccines in adolescents, and vaccination of this age group could start in the fall. Moderna also announced Tuesday it has [begun a study in children under age 12 years](#) that gradually will include children as young as 6 months. The AAP has been pushing for vaccine trials in children.

Dr. Fauci's comments about vaccination came amid announcements from federal health officials Wednesday about funding for schools and underserved communities, updated Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) testing guidance and a new study on vaccine equity.

Funds allocated to help reopen schools

The U.S. Department of Education [announced plans to allocate \\$122 billion](#) from the American Rescue Plan to help reopen schools. The funding will go to each state, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia to

purchase personal protective equipment, add space, improve ventilation, hire more teachers and implement interventions to meet social, emotional, mental health and academic needs. Those funds will start to become available this month.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) also announced **\$10 billion in funding for screening testing in schools** to help identify people who are asymptomatic and potentially contagious.

“With this funding for testing, every state in America will have access to millions of dollars to set up screening testing programs to add a layer of protection for schools, teachers and students,” said Carole Johnson, White House testing coordinator.

CDC updates COVID-19 testing guidance

The CDC updated its **guidance on COVID-19 testing**, providing information on different types of tests that are available, how to choose a test, how to interpret tests in people who have been vaccinated and how to use testing for screening and surveillance in addition to diagnostics.

“Our newly released set of guidelines offers a comprehensive approach to testing and helps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 through the rapid identification and isolation of people who are infected, including those who do not know they are infected because they do not have symptoms,” said CDC Director Rochelle P. Walensky, M.D., M.P.H.

Four related documents provide guidance on testing in correctional facilities, workplaces, colleges and homeless shelters. The guidance also discusses health equity issues related to testing.

“To end this pandemic, everyone must have equal access to affordable and timely testing with fast turnaround times and results to identify infections and reduce community spread,” Dr. Walensky said.

Funding to help underserved communities

To support underserved communities, the CDC plans to provide **\$2.25 billion in grants to more than 100 health departments**. The grants will be used to improve testing and contact tracing for racial and ethnic minority groups and people in rural areas.

“This is truly a historic investment for CDC and an important step forward to help hard-hit communities turn the corner on this pandemic,” Dr. Walensky said.

HHS also has **allocated \$150 million to increase access to monoclonal antibody treatments** in underserved communities. The Food and Drug Administration has given emergency use authorization to **three such treatments** for people with mild to moderate COVID-19 who are at high risk of progressing to more severe disease.

“This new effort is going to speed assistance to hard-hit communities, really increasing the use and administration of the monoclonal antibody therapies, preventing hospitalization and death,” said Marcella Nunez-Smith, M.D., M.H.S., chair of the Biden administration’s COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force.

Study finds vaccination disparity in socially vulnerable areas

A new study in the CDC’s *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* found disparities in COVID-19 vaccination in populations deemed socially vulnerable due to factors like their race/ethnicity and economic status.

The study looked at data on more than 49 million U.S. residents from nearly every state who have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. Researchers found vaccination coverage of 15.8% in counties

with low social vulnerability and 13.9% in counties with high social vulnerability.

Dr. Nunez-Smith recently laid out some of the federal efforts to decrease inequities in vaccination. Those include federal sites and pharmacy partners in targeted areas, sites with extended hours, mobile units and building relationships in communities. The government also is partnering with federal health centers that serve large communities of people who have low income, are racial/ethnic minorities and have limited English proficiency.

Resources

- [Information from the CDC about COVID-19 for health care professionals](#)
- [Information about COVID-19 from the AAP](#)
- [Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org on coronavirus](#)

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