



MISSISSIPPI STATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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Dear Coaches, Student Athletes and Parents:

The COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating impacts for many families both in terms of severe illness and death. Although most younger Mississippians will fully recover, we have seen four deaths in children since the start of the pandemic and numerous hospitalizations with severe disease. COVID has also been extremely disruptive for all schools and especially student athletes. Illnesses, outbreaks and quarantines have interrupted numerous athletic competitions.

Mississippi is currently inundated with cases as the Delta variant sweeps across the state. This variant is far more contagious than seen last year and appears to be more deadly for younger adult age groups. The Delta variant will make a successful school year all that much more challenging.

Fortunately, the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is available to children and teens ages 12-18. Over 57,000 kids in this age group have been vaccinated in Mississippi. This vaccine is extremely well tolerated and showed nearly 100% efficacy in clinical trials for preventing symptomatic disease for this age group.

What are the benefits of the vaccine for Mississippians 12-18?

- Preventing illness, hospitalization (and though rare) death
- Increased participation in school and sports activities
- Helps teams participate in events and playoffs
- Fully vaccinated children, teens and adults do not have to quarantine following close contact exposures
- Decreased transmission to family and friends (with Delta variant – each case can spread it to 8-9 others on average)

Addressing Common Myths

- COVID vaccines do not cause infertility. In fact, COVID itself has been shown to be harmful for both male and female reproductive health.
- COVID vaccines are extremely safe. COVID has killed over 7,500 Mississippians but there have been zero confirmed deaths from the vaccine.
- COVID vaccines do not contain chips, metal or cells.
- The COVID vaccines are some of the best studied vaccines in history and are not “experimental”. COVID vaccines are currently *authorized* by the FDA and full *approval* is anticipated soon – many months ahead of the review deadline.

The Pfizer vaccine has rarely been associated with myocarditis, especially in young males. This is a transient inflammation of the heart muscle. Four cases have been identified in Mississippi, all with mild symptoms that resolved quickly. Please know, the COVID virus causes myocarditis at a far higher rate than seen with the vaccine.

The Mississippi State Medical Association and the Mississippi State Department of Health strongly recommend the COVID vaccine for everyone in the state, especially student athletes. Protecting our kids from COVID will not only save lives but will ensure more successful performance, in the classroom and on the field.

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