DCFS Resource Parent/Caregiver
COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions
08/8/2022

1. **Should I get the vaccine?** Yes! Vaccines are still the best means of protection against severe COVID-19 infection. Even if you get infected, you are likely to have a much milder illness if you are up-to-date on vaccination (with boosters as appropriate). There are VERY FEW instances when vaccination is not recommended — this is usually in people with a history of severe allergies. Consult your medical provider if you believe that you may not be suitable for vaccination.

2. **Should I get boosted?** Yes! Boosters are now available for anyone five months after the initial vaccination. Those over age 50 and with complicated health conditions are also eligible for another booster four months after the first booster. It does not matter which vaccine you choose for your boosters — both Pfizer and Moderna boosters may be given regardless of which you received for your initial dose. There isn't a "better" choice.

3. **What if I don't want to get the vaccine or boosters?** It is still voluntary to get the COVID-19 vaccine but highly recommended — vaccines boost your immune system, so it will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. You should still get the vaccine even if you already had COVID-19. There is some evidence that vaccine protection is more effective than protection after infection.

4. **What do I do if I think I have COVID-19?** You can test with a home testing kit (rapid test) or at a health care facility with a PCR test. It is best to be prepared with home kits, so you don't need to venture out if you are sick. If you have mild symptoms, follow local health guidelines for management at home, but call your health care provider early in the course of your symptoms if you are over age 50 or in a high-risk group. There are effective medications for managing symptoms that are available free of charge (even if you don't have insurance). Please note that a negative test does NOT mean you don't have a COVID infection. Many people with symptoms do not test positive until the third or fourth day after the onset of symptoms. Please mask and isolate any time you have symptoms that may be COVID-19 or another contagious infection.

5. **Is Personal Protective Equipment required after getting vaccinated?** Yes, absolutely. It is important to continue taking precautions like washing hands, wearing face coverings and practicing physical distancing, even after you have had two doses of the vaccine. While the vaccine is very effective at preventing severe COVID-19 illness, it does not fully prevent infection and may not be as effective against some of the new variants, including Omicron.

6. **I heard that masks don't help with the new variants. What should I do?** It is true that the newer variants (including Omicron BA5) are more contagious than prior variants. The best protection is to be current with vaccination/boosters and to wear a high-quality mask, such as a

surgical mask, KN-95 or N-95 mask. Cloth masks do not provide adequate protection and are no longer recommended.

7. **If I've had COVID or tested positive, do I still need to get the vaccine?** Yes. You are likely mostly protected for 90 days after COVID-19, but you may receive the vaccine as soon as you recover from COVID-19 illness in order to provide longer-lasting protection.

8. **Can I get COVID multiple times? How often?** Re-infection is becoming more common — and some people are becoming re-infected less than 30 days after a prior infection. However, most people are relatively protected for 90 days after infection.

9. **What happens if I am vaccinated/boosted and I take in a youth who has COVID or has been exposed to COVID? Am I safe?** You are likely to receive significant protection from severe COVID-19 infection 14 days after your second vaccine. However, this is not complete protection — you should use PPE to minimize risk in any setting where you have a high chance of exposure/infection.

10. **Should I take children in my care for vaccines even if I don't know whether birth parents desire vaccination?** Yes! COVID-19 vaccines are now available for children ages six months and older as part of routine care. As a resource parent, it is expected that you will take children in your care for routine health visits and that they will receive all routine childhood vaccinations, including the COVID-19 vaccination. You may take children in your care to their primary care providers or to local vaccine sites to get vaccines and boosters. You do not need to consult birth parents about vaccination. But do speak to your worker if you are aware that a child's birth parent does NOT want their child vaccinated against COVID-19 or any other vaccine.

11. **How do I know whether children in my care have already been vaccinated or need a booster?** By law, all COVID-19 vaccines (including boosters) are entered into a database. Your health care provider (and the provider for children in your care) can access this database and can advise you about needed vaccines and boosters.

12. **What do I do if a child in my care has symptoms that may be COVID-19?** Please seek medical advice — a phone call to your health care provider or an in-person visit — if a child in your care has symptoms of COVID-19. If you do seek in-person care, please wear a mask and inform the front desk that you believe the child in your care may have an active COVID infection. Wear PPE whenever possible if you are caring for a child with any evidence of contagious illness. Please note that a negative test does NOT mean a person does not have a COVID infection. Many people with symptoms do not test positive until the third or fourth day after symptom onset. Please mask and isolate any time you have symptoms that may be COVID-19 or some other contagious infection.

13. **The children in my home have unmonitored birth parent visits – how can we find out if the birth parents got the vaccine?** Immunization records are confidential health information and

DCFS is not legally able to compel parents, employees, or others to tell us whether they've received the vaccine. During monitored visits, continue to take precautions like washing hands, wearing face coverings and practicing physical distancing to protect yourself and others.

15.Can caregivers ask social workers if they have been vaccinated before letting them into their home? Immunization history is confidential health information, and no one (not even DCFS as the employer) is legally able to compel a worker to share vaccination or other health information. However, Los Angeles County has a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy for its workforce and anyone who is exempted must routinely test. Additionally, all DCFS social workers must wear a mask and maintain their social distance during visits. The purpose of the vaccination mandate and the aforementioned health and safety protocols is to protect our workforce and the members of the public who depend on County services.

14. **Which lasts longer, immunity after getting COVID-19 or protection from COVID-19 vaccines?** With the current variants, there is no certain time frame for protection against re-infection. The best approach to minimizing risk is to remain up to date on vaccination and boosters and to wear a mask in settings where transmission may be high — crowded indoor spaces, health care settings, visitation centers, and settings where the vaccination status of individuals is unknown.

For additional information, please visit the links below.

DPH FAQ and **CDC FAQ**