

Young teens should be added to vaccine rollout when supply increases

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Pediatricians, mental health clinicians, epidemiologists, infectious disease and vaccine experts from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) have noted that 12-15 year olds should be included in

the COVID-19 vaccine rollout as soon as supply constraints ease, but only after priority adult groups achieve higher vaccination rates.

The group also applauded the inclusion of 16-39 year olds in Australia's COVID-19 vaccine program and the Victorian Government's paid leave for teachers to be vaccinated, but note that teachers should be given priority when making vaccine bookings.

The experts made the statements in the first of a planned series of research briefs, summarizing the latest information on children and adolescents in relation to COVID-19.

Professor Andrew Steer, who co-chairs the MCRI COVID-19 Governance Group with Professor Sharon Goldfeld, said that "COVID-19 can cause infection in children and adolescents that requires hospitalization, although this is uncommon even with the delta strain, and rarely causes death."

"However, the impacts of 'long-COVID' are still unknown, so given that COVID-19 vaccines can safely protect those aged 12 years and older from infection and are already being used in many countries, this age group should be added to the rollout as a priority once supply constraints ease."

Professor Goldfeld said that "the pandemic is significantly affecting the [mental health](#), learning and wellbeing of children and adolescents, especially for the most disadvantaged communities. Prolonged [school closures](#) and lockdowns are exacerbating these impacts, meaning that teachers, early educators, and [school staff](#) should be prioritized for vaccination."

The Research Brief concluded that once public health restrictions are relaxed, unvaccinated children and adolescents will remain vulnerable to

infection and disease.

Clinical trials of mRNA vaccines in children under 12, including infants as young as 6 months, are still ongoing. Sufficient data on disease burden, [vaccine](#) safety and efficacy are required before we consider vaccinating this population, including at-risk children in this age group.

More information: Research brief—COVID-19 vaccination for children & adolescents: [www.mcri.edu.au/sites/default/ ...
ids_v1.1_20aug21.pdf](http://www.mcri.edu.au/sites/default/files/ids_v1.1_20aug21.pdf)

Provided by Murdoch Children's Research Institute

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