

UW Health: Doctors share their family's account navigating vaccine landscape

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MADISON, Wis. – Like countless families, the McBrides are trying to determine how to go through their daily lives when both parents are vaccinated, but their children aren't.

Joe and Lizzie, both UW Health doctors, are parents of two boys Joey, 7, and Ryan, 4, and though they work in healthcare, they face the same types of questions as anyone else: Should Joey return to in-person schooling with his first-grade class? How do we navigate the ever-changing childcare challenges? Can we take them on a vacation? Are sports OK?

This situation is complicated further as more children will be eligible for vaccination now that the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine has been authorized for children ages 12 to 15 years old.

“It's true, it is difficult to know exactly what we can do,” Joe McBride said, an adult and pediatric infectious disease expert at UW Health. “But, it really comes down to the risks versus the benefits of each situation.”

Fully vaccinated people can visit with unvaccinated people, including children, from a single household who are at low risk for severe COVID-19 disease indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This guidance is helpful, as are state and county health department guidelines, Joe

McBride said, but with each situation he encounters with his family, he asks the questions, “Are we safe and will we put others at risk?” If not, he said, his family follows existing state and federal advice, wears masks, keeps physically distanced and focuses on activities outdoors where the risk of infection is much lower.

“We are very fortunate that many of our friends and family are vaccinated, so we can visit with them,” Joe McBride said. “It just reinforces for us that if you can get vaccinated, you should, to spend more time with the ones you love.”

In addition to UW Health, the CDC, Wisconsin Department of Health Services and Public Health Madison & Dane County all offer guidance on ways to stay safe and protect others as more people become vaccinated against COVID-19, as well as what fully vaccinated people should do in public.

While more of the public becomes vaccinated, please help slow the spread of COVID-19 by:

- Wearing a mask
- Keeping a safe distance from others
- Washing your hands frequently
- Quarantining if you feel ill

Joe McBride is available for interviews today. A recorded interview with Joe and Lizzie McBride is also available.