

UW Health: Sees pediatric COVID-19 vaccinations slowing

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MADISON, Wis. – While starting to decrease, COVID-19 case counts are still very high in Wisconsin, and one segment of the population remains quite vulnerable – unvaccinated children 5 to 11 years old.

UW Health has witnessed a stark decline in scheduling for vaccinations in this age group. When the Pfizer/BioNTech mRNA vaccine first became available for children in this age range, UW Health gave 850 doses in one week in early November 2021, but for the period of Feb. 14 to 18, only 81 shots have been scheduled. Doses scheduled significantly slowed after the holiday season.

In Dane County, about 55% of children ages 5 to 11 years old have received one dose of the vaccine, but statewide far fewer, with only about 26% having received an initial dose, according to the state Department of Health Services data tracker website.

The decline in vaccine appointments is troubling as children in this age remain vulnerable even as other mitigation measures like mask requirements are being lifted in some settings. And this group tends to spend considerable time in groups and in close contact, like school settings, according to Dr. Jim Conway, pediatric infectious disease physician, UW Health Kids, and professor of pediatrics, UW School of Medicine and Public Health.

“We have to remind parents that this vaccine is thoroughly tested, safe and effective for kids this age,” he said. “They deserve to be protected like their peers, parents and teachers.”

Parents may have been waiting to see how the vaccine might impact others to be

sure it is safe, but that time has passed, Conway said.

“It’s understandable that some parents might have been feeling very cautious initially, but with the real-world evidence mounting that the omicron variant and the BA.2 subvariant are continuing to spread, these still-vulnerable patients should be vaccinated,” he said. “Vaccines remain our best tool in trying to get back to participating in gatherings safely, and to keep schools safe and active.”

Vaccines are widely available at UW Health and throughout the state. To schedule a vaccine shot at UW Health, please visit the vaccine scheduling [page](#) on coronavirus.uwhealth.org. Statewide, vaccine locations can be found at the Department of Health Services [website](#).

Conway is available for interviews today, and a recorded interview is also available.