

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Jennifer Donahue  
Communications Manager  
WCAAP  
206-713-1087  
jdonahue@wcaap.org

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Pediatricians support vaccinating adolescents ages 12-18 years against COVID-19 as experts continue to monitor for potential adverse effects.**

Seattle, WA – May 25, 2021. The Washington State Department of Health (DOH), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) have reported a small number of cases of myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle that is generally mild and easily treated, in individuals who have recently received vaccinations to protect against COVID-19.

A relationship between myocarditis and COVID-19 vaccination has not been established at this time, but health authorities and health care providers are watching this closely, placing the highest priority on the safety and well-being of Washington residents. The Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (WCAAP) is monitoring the situation and keeping pediatric providers throughout the state apprised of any updates so that they can provide reliable information to their patients and communities.

To date, Washington state health officials have not identified an increased incidence in the overall rates of myocarditis, despite rapidly increasing rates of COVID-19 vaccination in the U.S. Myocarditis cases are reported regularly in the community, most commonly in teens and young adults, often in response to infection or inflammation. COVID-19 infection itself can cause myocarditis.

Myocarditis is often mild and may be treated with ibuprofen or similar anti-inflammatory medication; it is rarely a long-term health concern for young people, though some experience more serious illness. Should an adolescent or adult experience any symptoms to suggest possible myocarditis, they should contact their health care provider. Symptoms include chest pain or pressure, or shortness of breath.

Information about potential side effects is carefully tracked in our vaccine monitoring systems, both within Washington state and nationally. The recent update from DOH was made in response to the continuous and careful approach to vaccine monitoring and safety. This update is evidence that these systems are effective and give health officials the ability to rapidly identify potential concerns, and a process to immediately notify the public if a clear correlation exists between the vaccine and myocarditis. At this time no such correlation has been identified but we continue to gather data in order to assess whether a relationship between myocarditis and receiving a COVID-19 vaccine exists.

We remind health care providers to be vigilant about using VAERS (Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System) to report possible cases of myocarditis or other unexpected events during the period of time after vaccines are received. We encourage families to enroll adolescents who have received COVID-19

vaccine in V-safe, a smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to provide health check-ins after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, at <http://cdc.gov/vsafe>.

Among children, 3.9 million cases of COVID-19 and at least 308 deaths have been reported in the U.S. as of May 13; for the week ending May 13, children were 24.0% of new reported weekly COVID-19 cases. Dr. Elizabeth Meade, current President of WCAAP, shares that “The threat of contracting COVID-19 for adolescents remains real and present, and we know that the best way we have to protect them against COVID-19 infection and associated complications is through the COVID-19 vaccine. We are carefully following information gathered about any potential side effects, as we have been doing since adolescents first became eligible to receive the vaccine, and will communicate updates as we get them.” COVID vaccine safety for people ages 12 and older has been demonstrated through careful evaluation; the vaccine protects recipients from COVID-19-associated illness with enormous efficacy, and allows them to safely rejoin social, recreational and educational activities they have missed out on during the pandemic.

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The Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (WCAAP) represents over 1100 pediatric health care providers throughout Washington State. We promote health and wellness for all children, adolescents, and families and advance equitable, evidence-based, collaborative approaches to pediatric care. Learn more about WCAAP at [wcaap.org](http://wcaap.org).