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Are we ready to vaccinate a new wave of children?

By Jake Griffin



Federal regulators are expected to decide later this month if the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine can be administered to children between the ages of 5 and 11. *Brian Hill | Staff Photographer, September 2020*

Children ages 5 to 11 might soon be eligible to receive the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, but they won't have access to the numerous mass vaccination sites that served adults and older children earlier in the year.

That has pediatricians, suburban school districts, national pharmacy chains, park districts and public health agencies bracing for a new surge of people seeking the vaccine. [Recent polling shows at least a third of U.S. parents](#) plan to immediately seek vaccines for their children ages 5 to 11 when the shots are made available, possibly this month. On Thursday, Pfizer asked the U.S. government to allow use of its COVID-19 vaccine in that age group

The Illinois Department of Public Health does not track COVID-19 infections specifically for this age group, but data from the state health agency shows the percentage of people under 20

getting infected is much higher over the past nine months than it was during the first nine months of the pandemic, when no one was vaccinated.

Illinois is home to an estimated 1.1 million children ages 5 to 11, according to figures from the U.S. Census Bureau. That's nearly 9% of the state's total population.

Most mass vaccination sites in the suburbs closed by July. But unlike during the initial surge of those seeking to be vaccinated against the respiratory disease that has killed more than 25,000 in Illinois alone, the state's surplus of vaccine doses is much higher today.

"We expect that most children will be able to receive vaccine at their pediatrician's office, Cook County Health clinics, local pharmacies, school clinics and other Cook County Department of Public Health vaccination events," said Dr. Jacqueline Korpics, medical director of COVID-19 response at Cook County's public health department. "We are working closely with schools to communicate options for their students."

Pediatricians would likely be the first stop for most parents, but because of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine's super-cold storage requirements, some children's doctors might not be able to carry it.

"Go to any place that has a dose as soon as it's available," said Dr. Emily Landon, head of the University of Chicago's infectious disease prevention and control program. "It's the same vaccine, same needles, same storage. Just bring your own lollipop."

Officials at school districts that have hosted vaccination clinics in the past said they might do something similar for younger students.

"For (students) that qualified, and who chose to be vaccinated, we offered a window of time at one of our schools to come by and get their vaccination shot," said Arlington Heights Elementary District 25 spokesman Adam Harris.

"We would likely offer another opportunity if the vaccination becomes available for students 11 and under as a service to our community so that there is easy and convenient access to the vaccine."

Other school officials said they are waiting to see if such clinics are necessary.

"We have partnered with community groups to offer a vaccine clinic in the past," said Wheaton Warrenville Unit District 200 spokeswoman Erica Loiacono. "As more information about the vaccine becomes available, we will review it."

Karla Jimenez, spokeswoman at Elgin Area District U-46, one of the largest school districts in the state, said, "The decision to offer a vaccine event would depend on interest from parent."

CVS officials said the pharmacy chain is "fully prepared" to handle an influx of customers seeking the vaccine following the "expected regulatory approval" for the 5-to-11 age group this month.

And given the connection many suburban children have with local park districts, officials in some of those agencies have begun planning to offer clinics, as well.

"The Itasca Park District is preparing to provide a mass vaccination clinic to those age 5 to 11, once it has been approved," said Maryfran Leno, the agency's executive director.

"We are working closely with our Wood Dale Jewel-Osco, to be on top of this and ready to go once that approval comes through."

---Elgin Courier-News---10/8/2021

After beating Bartlett for first time since 2008, Larkin looks to punch playoff ticket behind Jamarion Stubbs: ‘He’s definitely electric.’

By Paul Johnson for Beacon-News



Jamarion Stubbs has scored five touchdowns this season as a senior to help Larkin stay in the playoff race. (Paul Johnson / The Beacon-News)

After Friday’s 28-21 upset win, senior Jamarion Stubbs was told how long it has been since **Larkin** had beaten **Bartlett**.

“I was 4 when it happened,” he said.

Indeed, it was 2008 the last time the Royals defeated the Hawks, and Stubbs was a big reason this time for Larkin. He ran for 70 yards and two touchdowns on 14 carries and also recovered a fumble on defense.

The versatile Stubbs lines up at running back, wide receiver and even in the slot for the Royals. The state medalist in track also plays cornerback and on special teams.

“He’s definitely electric,” first-year Larkin coach Grant Dietz said. “He has the ‘it’ factor. He’s elusive. You can’t square him up.

“He has a lot of ‘make you miss,’ I call it. Then if you miss him, he has the breakaway speed to get away from you, too.”

Stubbs has rushed for 121 yards and those two TDs this season. He's added 30 catches for 356 yards and three more TDs.

"I just try to get big plays for my team so we can all feed off it," Stubbs said. "I know if I get a big play, it's going to have everybody else excited and they're going to make a big play. I want everybody to shine."

He also has a strong connection with quarterback Dontrell Maxie. They met as freshmen and were both promoted to varsity as sophomores, so their careers have been on parallel paths.

Maxie has thrown for 802 yards and nine TDs while running for 154 yards and four TDs.

"He's having a big year this year," Stubbs said of Maxie. "You could see everything good coming for him. We look at each other, and we have the same mindset."

Dietz is in his second season with Larkin's football program, having coached the offensive line in the spring. In 2008, he was coaching a Virginia high school team to the state semifinals, so he had to be alerted to the historical significance of Friday's win.

"In 2008, I had no idea where Elgin was," Dietz said. "To have a win like that, I'm almost too new to understand the gravity of that. These guys have, the school has. Me, I'm too new for it."

Larkin (3-3, 3-3) was in control most of the night against Bartlett, one of the few times in recent years Larkin led one of the Upstate Eight Conference's top teams.

"We haven't beaten one of the top teams in the conference in a minute," Stubbs said. "We came out with a game plan and we executed it. We knew we had to come out strong. We didn't want to take the first punch.

"We wanted to come out and hit them first and let them respond to that. It gave us a lot more confidence."

The win puts Larkin in position to make a run toward its first playoff berth since 2006. The Royals face a pair of teams with 3-3 records in East Aurora and Elgin before finishing the season against Streamwood (1-5).

Stubbs is a three-sport star, but he said there's nothing like playing in front of a crowd under the lights in big games.

The next three weeks, Stubbs believes that's exactly what will give the Royals a boost.

“Friday night lights are different,” Stubbs said. “I love playing in front of the whole crowd, everybody from school, everybody from my family there. It just adds a little more spice to the game.”