

## Open Letter to Parents and Caregivers in Windsor and Essex County

As leaders in the field of medicine in Windsor and Essex County, we are compelled to do everything within the scope of our roles to encourage every eligible member of our community to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. With the expansion of eligibility to children 5-11 years of age, we acknowledge that parents and caregivers may have questions before making the decision to vaccinate their children. In this regard, we want to clearly form a united voice to emphasize the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine for children within the 5-11 age group.

Throughout your child's life, vaccines have been a safe and effective way to protect them from a multitude of illnesses. In fact, in recent history vaccines have been one of the most effective public health interventions for the prevention of disease for people young and old.

Real world data on children who have received the COVID-19 vaccine demonstrate that the benefits of receiving the vaccine far outweigh any potential risks of vaccination. Serious side effects after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, such as allergic reactions, are extremely rare. As with any vaccine, there may be mild side effects felt within a few days of receiving the vaccine. These may include redness, soreness, or swelling at the injection site, mild fever, headache, tiredness, muscle and joint pain, and chills. Side effects usually mean that the vaccine is working to stimulate your immune system.

We know this decision can be difficult and many parents and caregivers may be unsure whether vaccinating their child is the right thing to do. To help with your decision-making, we encourage parents and caregivers to speak with their child's health care provider to address any of the questions or concerns they may have about getting their child vaccinated. Free phone consultations with health professionals are also available by appointment through [SickKids Hospital](#) by calling 437-881-3505 or [Scarborough Health](#) by calling 416-438-2911 ext. 5738. Additional resources and more information on the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine for children 5-11 years of age is available on the health unit's website at [www.wechu.org](http://www.wechu.org).

If your child is eligible, and has not yet received the COVID-19 vaccine, now is the time to get your questions answered from a reliable source, address your concerns, and get your child fully vaccinated. Our community has worked towards making the COVID-19 vaccine accessible for parents and caregivers to get their children vaccinated. COVID-19 vaccination is available for children 5-11 years of age and all eligible residents at participating local pharmacies, through participating healthcare providers, at pop-up vaccination clinics throughout the region, and at the local mass vaccination sites. Free resources are available to help you and your child attend a vaccination site. Please visit [www.WEVax.ca](http://www.WEVax.ca) for locations and booking information, as well as information on available transportation, childcare & accessibility supports.

Sincerely,

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