

1 in 3 parents hesitant to get child vaccinated against Covid-19: Study

Parents with reservations about jab are also less likely to trust their children's doctors

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About one in three parents in Singapore is hesitant to get his child vaccinated against Covid-19, a study has found.

The study was conducted by a team of paediatricians from Khoo Teck Puat - National University Children's Medical Institute at the National University Hospital (NUH).

Another key finding was that those with reservations about getting their children vaccinated against Covid-19 were less likely to trust their children's doctors.

Results from the study show that only 42 per cent of vaccine-hesitant parents fully trusted their children's doctors, compared with 68 per cent of parents who were not vaccine-hesitant.

"This informs us that we really have to work very closely with every parent to make that informed

decision for their child to ensure the best outcome," said Dr Lee Le Ye, one of the authors of the study.

The survey involved 628 parents aged between 32 and 45, and was conducted between November 2021 and March 2022 through electronic platform FormSG.

QR codes to access the electronic survey were placed around NUH, including the paediatrics and obstetrics wards, and e-mails were sent to hospital staff.

Singapore began offering Covid-19 vaccinations for children between the ages of six months and four years from Oct 25.

To build trust, Dr Lee, who is a senior consultant at NUH's neonatology department, said a tailored approach is needed for every parent.

Doctors can educate parents on Covid-19 vaccinations during their children's medical consultations, when they will be more open to such information, she said.

Parents also have different concerns. "One parent might be worried about the dose, while another might be worried about the side effects. Another might be worried about logistics, or whether they should be spacing out the Covid-19 vaccinations between another routine standard vaccination," Dr Lee said, adding that parents take their

children for multiple vaccinations under the National Childhood Immunisation Schedule around the age of one.

NUH nurse Illene Chen, 30, said she was unsure if her two-year-old daughter, who recovered from Covid-19 in August, should take a dose of the vaccine.

As for her two-month-old son, she would prefer for him to finish his compulsory childhood immunisations before considering the Covid-19 vaccine.

She said she is planning to discuss these issues with her family doctor next week. "Whatever the doctor recommends, we will take his advice," said Ms Chen, who

added that she is leaning towards vaccinating her children against Covid-19, given the recent rise in cases driven by the XBB strain.

The survey also found that mothers were less vaccine-hesitant compared with fathers.

Researchers say one potential reason is that mothers are usually the ones taking their children for compulsory vaccinations, so they have more opportunities to establish trust with healthcare professionals.

Another finding from the study was that vaccine hesitancy was significantly associated with lower educational level and household income, as well as being unvaccinated against Covid-19.

Dr Lee urged parents to get their children vaccinated against the coronavirus.

"Children, especially younger ones, actually do have a more severe (form of the) disease, requiring hospitalisation, ICU (intensive care unit) care and oxygen supplementation. Hence, it is important for us to protect these children."

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