



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis speaks at a press conference at the Broward Health Medical Center in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., on Sept. 16, 2021. (Wilfredo Lee/AP Photo)

PREMIUM US

DeSantis Doubles Down on Vaccinations, Says Florida Won't 'Jab' Babies

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PUNTA GORDA, Fla.—Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis doubled down on his policy of “no jabs for babies” at a press conference in Callahan, Florida, on June 20.

“We recommend against [vaccinating babies],” the governor told the crowd. “We are not going to have any program where we’re trying to jab 6-month-old babies with mRNA. That’s just the reality.”

DeSantis pushed back on media coverage that painted Florida in a bad light for the policy decision and accused the White House of spreading misinformation and trying to shame the state into submission.

“It’s what they do,” he said. “We’re not surprised the White House would amplify the lie because that’s what they do—they thought somehow we would be like embarrassed by that.”

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told media outlets on June 17 that DeSantis had “reversed course and is now ordering vaccines,” which led the governor’s press secretary, Christina Pushaw, to fire back, accusing Jean-Pierre of “spreading disinformation.”

“Florida is not placing any orders of COVID shots for zero to 5-year-old babies and kids,” Pushaw posted on Twitter. “What they have couched as a reversal is actually the governor’s steadfast position that ... Florida does not recommend, nor distribute, shots for babies. Health care providers that want the vaccines can obtain them and any parent who wants it for their child can get it.

“No state policy change in Florida. The only thing that’s changed was the federal government issued the EUA [emergency use authorization] for the shots today. Retract your lies.”

On June 15, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) advisory panel voted unanimously to recommend Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines for children as young as 6 months, saying that the benefits outweigh the risks.

The governor said after studying the data—and looking at what European countries are doing—he said Florida won't be ordering the vaccine for children.

“We're following the data,” DeSantis said. “I would just caution people, look at the actual data in the clinical trial. It's the weakest possible data that you could possibly see ... doesn't even track the outcomes.”

He said people can do what they think is right for their children.

“Our Department of Health has looked at it. There is no proven benefit to put a baby on mRNA, so that's why our recommendation is against it,” DeSantis said.

An area of concern with the clinical trials was that the FDA wasn't taking into consideration the very young children who had recovered from COVID-19, according to the governor.

“They don't have any clinical data on that,” he said. “These people in Washington have rejected the idea of natural immunity—they said that the vaccine was better than prior infection and every credible study that's been done has said that's not the case.”