

CDC interim guidance for immunization services during the COVID-19 pandemic

Importance of immunization services during the COVID-19 pandemic

Efforts to reduce transmission of COVID-19, such as stay-at-home and shelter-in-place orders, have led to decreased use of routine preventive medical services, including **immunization** services. Ensuring that routine vaccination is maintained or reinitiated during the COVID-19 pandemic is essential for protecting individuals and communities from vaccine-preventable diseases and outbreaks. Routine vaccination prevents illnesses that lead to unnecessary medical visits, hospitalizations and further strain the health care system. For the upcoming influenza season, influenza vaccination will be paramount to reduce the impact of respiratory illnesses in the population and resulting burdens on the health care system during the COVID-19 pandemic. Communicating the importance of vaccination to patients and parents/caregivers as well as the safety protocols and procedures outlined in this guidance can help provide reassurance to those who may otherwise be hesitant to present for vaccination visits.

Vaccine recommendations during the COVID-19 pandemic

Routine vaccination is an essential preventive care service for children, adolescents and adults (including pregnant women) that should not be delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In light of COVID-19-related reductions in people accessing vaccination services, it is important to assess the vaccination status of all patients at each visit to avoid missed opportunities for vaccination and ensure timely vaccine catch-up. All vaccines due or overdue should be administered according to the recommended **CDC immunization schedules** during that visit, unless a specific contraindication exists, to provide protection as soon as possible as well as minimize the number of healthcare visits needed to complete vaccination.

Additional considerations for influenza vaccination

Annual influenza vaccination is recommended for all persons age six months and older to decrease morbidity and mortality caused by influenza. Health care providers should consult current influenza vaccine recommendations for guidance around the timing of administration and use of specific vaccines.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, reducing the overall burden of respiratory illnesses is important to protect vulnerable populations at risk for severe illness, the health care system, and other critical infrastructure. Thus, health care providers should use every opportunity during the influenza vaccination season to administer influenza vaccines to all eligible persons.

Strategies for catch-up vaccination

With reduced vaccine administration during the COVID-19 pandemic, unvaccinated or undervaccinated patients are susceptible to preventable illness and communities are at risk for

outbreaks. Thus, implementation of strategies to promote adherence to the vaccination schedule and ensure catch-up vaccination is important, especially for children. Reminder and recall systems should be implemented to identify patients who are due for or who have missed vaccine doses. IIS and electronic health records may be able to support this work. In addition, the vaccination status of all patients should be assessed at every health care visit to reduce missed opportunities for vaccination. Use of standing orders may further improve efficiency of catch-up vaccination.

To view this CDC communication in its' entirety, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pandemic-guidance/index.html>.