Maintaining and strengthening routine childhood vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Substantial disruptions to outpatient medical care during COVID-19 pandemic

As number of COVID-19 cases increased and stay-at-home orders implemented, nearly 70% reduction in outpatient in-person visits before starting to rebound

March 13: U.S. national emergency declared

Pediatrics among the hardest-hit specialties

47% cumulative decline in visits from March 15 to June 20, 2020

- Pediatrics: -47%
- Ophthalmology: -47%
- Otolaryngology: -47%
- Pulmonology: -45%
- Dermatology: -42%
- Surgery: -41%
- Gastroenterology: -41%
- Cardiology: -40%
- Urology: -39%
- Orthopedics: -39%
- Allergy/Immunology: -36%
- Primary Care: -31%
- Oncology: -28%
- Obstetrics/Gynecology: -28%
- Endocrinology: -28%
- Behavioral Health: -23%
- Rheumatology: -21%

Ateev Mehrotra et al., Commonwealth Fund, June 2020.
Disruptions in outpatient medical care among all pediatric age groups during COVID-19 pandemic

Percent change in visits from baseline

Week starting


0% - 10% - 20% - 30% - 40% - 50% - 60% - 70% - 80%

Ateev Mehrotra et al., Commonwealth Fund, June 2020.
COVID-19 pandemic and disruptions to routine childhood vaccination


All non-influenza vaccines

Source: CDC
COVID-19 pandemic and disruptions to routine childhood vaccination

Measles-containing vaccine

Source: CDC

Notable Dates:
1 1/20/2020: First US case reported (Washington state)
2 3/13/2020: US national emergency declared
What is the capacity among pediatric providers to administer vaccines?

- Vaccines for Children (VFC) program: provides vaccines at no cost to eligible children; ~38,000 enrolled practices encompass ~86% of U.S. pediatricians

- Among 1,933 VFC-enrolled practices the majority are: currently open, offering vaccines, and able to accept new patients (as of May 20, 2020)

  - 90% are open
  - 96% are offering vaccines
  - 59% are accepting new patients

*Among open practices; 81% offering vaccines to all patients

Immunization infrastructure remains strong during COVID-19

Conclusions from survey of VFC providers

- As of May, 2020, immunization infrastructure sufficient to meet patient needs and ensure catch-up vaccination, though some access issues remain

- Majority of providers will be able to administer vaccines during the critical back-to-school period

- To help ensure routine childhood vaccine services get back on track, efforts needed to support providers and parents

CDC activities with immunization programs and partners to support routine childhood vaccination

- **Monitor** vaccination service delivery to inform targeted interventions

- **Support**
  - Providers through the development of guidance and support materials
  - Immunization awardees in identifying and responding to disruptions in vaccination
  - Catch-up vaccination through reminder/recall systems
  - Access to vaccines by identifying gaps in VFC provider network
  - Identification of policy interventions to support healthcare providers

- **Communicate**
  - Importance of vaccination to parents, providers, and partners
  - Information on VFC program to families

- **Plan** back-to-school vaccination activities during the summer and influenza vaccination in the fall
CDC Interim Guidance for Immunization Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic
Routine immunization services remain critical

- Routine vaccination prevents illnesses that lead to increased medical visits and hospitalizations, further straining the healthcare system

- Influenza vaccination will be critical to reduce the impact of respiratory illnesses and resulting burdens on the healthcare system

https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pandemic-guidance/index.html
Routine vaccination across the lifespan

- **Children and adolescents:** Reschedule missed well-child visits and/or vaccinations
  - Start with newborns, infants and children up to aged 24 months, young children, and extending through adolescence

- **Pregnant women:** If vaccination has been delayed, administer vaccines during the next in-person appointment

- **Adults:** Administer all recommended vaccines
  - Especially important in older adults and those with underlying conditions

https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pandemic-guidance/index.html
Decreasing immunization rates mean it is particularly important to:

- Assess the vaccination status of all patients to avoid missed opportunities and ensure timely vaccination catch-up.

- Administer all vaccines due or overdue according to the recommended [CDC immunization schedules](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pandemic-guidance/index.html) during each visit.
Catch-up vaccination strategies

- Reminder/recall systems
- Forecasting through EMR or IIS
- Standing orders

https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pandemic-guidance/index.html
Vaccination administration during the COVID-19 pandemic

- Vaccination in the medical home ideal to ensure patients receive other preventive services that may have been deferred.

- Regardless of vaccination location, best practices for storage and handling of vaccines and vaccine administration should be followed.

- Information on vaccines administered should be documented so that providers have accurate and timely information, and to ensure continuity of care in the setting of COVID-19 related disruptions.

https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pandemic-guidance/index.html
Vaccination of persons with confirmed or suspected COVID-19

- Routine vaccination should be deferred in persons with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, regardless of symptoms

https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pandemic-guidance/index.html
Follow CDC guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in healthcare settings

- Screen patients for COVID-19 symptoms before and during visit
- Ensure physical distancing (at least 6 feet apart, where possible)
- Limit and monitor facility points of entry and install barriers to limit physical contact with patients at triage
- Implement policies for cloth face masks for persons aged ≥2 years (if tolerated)
- Ensure adherence to respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette, and hand hygiene
- Enhanced surface decontamination

Use appropriate personal protective equipment

- **Face mask**
  - **Recommended:** All healthcare providers (N95 masks not recommended)

- **Eye protection**
  - **Recommended:** Areas of moderate/substantial community transmission
  - **Optional:** Areas of minimal/no community transmission

- **Gloves**
  - **Recommended:** Intranasal or oral vaccines
  - **Optional:** Intramuscular or subcutaneous vaccines

Ensure physical distancing during vaccination visits

Separate sick from well patients

• Schedule well and sick visits at different times of the day
• Place sick visits in different areas of the facility or different locations

Ensure physical distancing measures

• At least 6 feet during all aspects of visit: check-in, checkout, screening procedures, postvaccination monitoring
• Use strategies such as physical barriers, signs, ropes, floor markings

Reduce crowding in waiting room

• Ask patients to wait outside (e.g., in their vehicles) until called in

https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pandemic-guidance/index.html
Reassure parents through communication

- Encourage parents to return for well-child visits
- Discuss the safety protocols put in place to ensure patients can be safely vaccinated

https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pandemic-guidance/index.html
Prior to the pandemic, ~50% of U.S. children eligible to receive free vaccines through VFC

- More may be eligible now due to recent loss insurance

Parents of recently-eligible children may not be aware of VFC

Partners and providers can help improve vaccine access by increasing awareness and enrollment in VFC program

https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/index.html
Preparing for back-to-school vaccination

School vaccination requirements provide a critical checkpoint for children's vaccination status

- Many school-age children at risk for undervaccination and non-compliance with school vaccine requirements

- Important to augment back-to-school vaccine clinics to ensure that children have an opportunity for vaccination
Signs of recovery in routine childhood vaccination


All non-influenza vaccines

Gap narrowing between 2019 and 2020

Source: CDC
Resources for routine vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic

https://www.immunizationcoalitions.org/resource-repository/

CDC resources for parents and immunization partners

AAP’s #CallYourPediatrician campaign

Immunization Action Coalition Repository of Resources
Conclusions

- Substantial disruptions to routine childhood vaccination services has occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, though signs of recovery have appeared.

- Immunization programs, partners, and providers can help get childhood vaccination back on track by supporting catch-up vaccination efforts and communicating with parents about safe vaccination during the pandemic.
Thank you

For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

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