

Strategies to Improve Adult Vaccination Coverage



Many vaccines are recommended for adults, but **vaccines don't work unless we get them into the arms of the people who need them.** Despite the fact that there are safe and effective vaccines, diseases that can be prevented by these vaccines continue to take a huge toll among adults in the United States.

Low adult vaccination coverage rates occur for a variety of reasons, including low community demand for vaccines, lack of access to vaccination services, and system- and provider-related factors. Successful adult vaccination delivery depends on several patient and provider factors, as well as system issues, such as vaccine supply and reimbursement.

Adults are unlikely to seek vaccination unless they believe that the disease is a threat to them and that there is a vaccine that can prevent the disease. They need to know that they are personally at risk. Even if they know a vaccine is available, adults also may have misconceptions about the vaccine and inordinate concerns about vaccine adverse reactions.

A knowledgeable provider who uses effective strategies like the ones suggested below can address these issues.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

Unequivocal provider recommendation

Standing orders protocols

Reminder and recall systems

Assessment and feedback

Expansion of patient access

An unequivocal provider recommendation is crucial.

- One of the leading reasons adults identify for not receiving a vaccine is the lack of a recommendation from their provider.
- **An unequivocal vaccine recommendation by an adult's healthcare provider is one of the most important interventions to improve patient acceptance of a vaccine.**
- Providers often don't appreciate the power of their recommendation of a vaccine, or the impact of their lack of a recommendation. Most adults rely on their providers to let them know which vaccines are recommended and when they should be given.

Standing orders protocols work.

- Standing orders protocols are a series of written medical orders authorizing a qualified (i.e., eligible to do so under state law) healthcare professional to assess the need for and administer vaccine to all persons meeting certain criteria (such as age or underlying medical condition), eliminating the need for an individual physician's order for a patient's vaccine.
- Standing orders have been shown to be the most consistently effective means for increasing vaccination rates and reducing missed opportunities for vaccination.
- Standing orders templates for all routinely recommended adult vaccines are available from IAC at www.immunize.org/standing-orders.

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Reminder and recall systems are efficient and effective.

- **PATIENT reminder and recall systems** involve *reminding patients* when vaccinations are due, or recalling them if they are overdue, to receive a recommended vaccine. These systems can be as “low tech” as a postcard or as “high tech” as text messaging or telephone autodial systems. State/local immunization information systems (IISs or “registries”) often can be used to generate both reminders and recall notices to patients.
- **PROVIDER reminder and recall systems** are similar, but they are *reminders for the provider* that individual patients are due – or overdue – for specific vaccinations at the time of a visit. The reminders and recalls can be delivered in a number of ways, such as through computer notification, a flow sheet or checklist in the medical record, or by flagging the medical record with a sticker or stamp. Some IISs can provide reminders about patient due dates. In addition, many electronic medical record systems have modules available for best practice alerts. These often can be set up to provide prompts when a patient is due to receive vaccines.

Assessment and feedback are helpful tools for improving coverage.

- Assessment and feedback for providers are effective interventions that involve evaluating a provider’s delivery of one or more vaccines and then giving the provider feedback about his or her performance.
- Your state/local immunization program may be able to help you determine your vaccination coverage levels, particularly when you participate in a registry. Contact your state/local immunization program (see www.immunize.org/coordinators) for more information.

Expanding patient access increases rates.

- Expanding patient access to vaccination services improves vaccination rates. Increasing the availability of vaccinations can be accomplished by:
 - increasing or changing hours when immunization services are offered;
 - opening an “express lane” that offers little or no waiting time for patients seeking vaccinations only, or offering “immunization only” clinic hours during the evening or on weekends.

Choosing interventions that work and that are well matched to local needs, priorities, and capabilities is vital to improving vaccination coverage. At the very least, clinicians who see adults in their practice should screen for vaccine indications, recommend the vaccines, and either make the vaccines available in their offices or have a reliable referral site identified where patients can be sent for vaccination services.

Clinicians owe it to their adult patients to provide educational materials about vaccines in their offices, inform patients of the availability of and their need for vaccines, and encourage vaccine use. **A few simple improvements in office practices can save many lives.**

Additional information about strategies to improve adult vaccination rates is available from CDC at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/adults/for-practice/increasing-vacc-rates.html.