



## **CDC Renewed Call to Action: Add Routine Vaccinations to the Back-to-School Checklist**

Late summer is usually a time many families begin preparing to send their children back to school. This is a crucial time when healthcare providers need to communicate with families to add routine childhood vaccinations, including COVID-19, to their back-to-school checklist.

[Vaccination coverage among kindergartners](#) remains at its lowest level in decades, having declined nationally from 95 to 93 percent during the two school years after the onset of the pandemic, including drops by up to 10 percentage points in some jurisdictions. This translates to up to 750,000 young learners that entered kindergarten during the pandemic who are potentially susceptible to vaccine-preventable diseases. [Influenza vaccination coverage](#) has also dropped by more than five percentage points among children 6 months to 17 years old since the 2019-2020 school year. In 2024, communities in the U.S. are responding to an uptick in [cases and outbreaks of measles](#) where children have been hospitalized, underscoring that under- and unvaccinated children are at risk for serious illness.

With a near-complete return to in-person learning, efforts must be made to ensure:

- All school-aged children are up to date on all Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended routine vaccines, including vaccines not required for school entry such as flu, HPV and COVID-19 vaccines.
- All children have equitable access to routine vaccines, and vaccination coverage is sufficiently high to protect children, their families, and their communities against vaccine-preventable diseases.

Although coverage has declined in recent years, we can get back on track to achieve the [Healthy People 2030](#) target of 95% routine kindergarten vaccination coverage by ensuring all young learners without a documented exemption are vaccinated. Healthcare providers are trusted sources of information for parents and guardians. They can also help families make the informed decision to vaccinate.

### **Here are some ways that healthcare providers can help school-aged children catch up on vaccination:**

#### **1. Remind families about vaccines that are due or required for school entry**

- Send reminders to families whose children are behind on well-child visits and routine vaccinations
- Display back-to-school vaccination [communication materials](#), such as 8.5" x 11" flyers and social media posts on your practice website and social media channels.

#### **2. Help share the facts**

Catch-up vaccination will require efforts from healthcare systems, healthcare providers, schools, state and local governments, and families to share the facts about routine vaccines and answer families' questions using resources such as CDC's [Frequently Asked Questions for Routine Immunizations](#), [Quick Conversation Guide on COVID-19 Vaccines for Children](#), and [how to address misinformation](#).

- **Facts about routine vaccines**
  - Here are the [facts about routine vaccines](#).
  - Vaccines are [the best way to protect](#) your child from severe illness and many infectious diseases, especially at the recommended age and at the recommended dose.
  - CDC's [Vaccines for Children](#) (VFC) program helps provide free vaccines to children who qualify.
- **[Facts about School Attendance and Good Health](#)**
  - In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of [public school students who are chronically absent](#)—meaning they miss at least 10 percent of days in a school year, whether excused or unexcused—has nearly [doubled](#), from about 15 percent in the 2018-2019 school year to around 30 percent in 2021-2022.
  - These large increases in absenteeism are widespread; every state for which data were available in this study saw significant increases in rates of chronic absenteeism between the 2018-2019 and 2021-2022 school years.
  - Infectious vaccine-preventable diseases, such as flu, contribute to school absenteeism.
  - Routine vaccinations are one tool to help [promote school attendance](#) to keep kids healthy, in school, and ready to learn.
  - Encouraging parents to vaccinate their children may reduce disruptions to childcare and in-person learning and activities.

### 3. Make [strong recommendations](#)

- Use every visit— including well-child checks, sports physicals, and other appointments— as an opportunity to recommend and administer all vaccines that are due or might have been missed.

### 4. Help make vaccines more accessible

- Offer vaccination-only appointments or hold vaccination clinics.
- Administer COVID-19 vaccines at the same time as other routinely recommended vaccines, if recommended and appropriate.
- Consider partnering with schools to offer vaccination clinics at schools and offer all ACIP-recommended vaccines for school-aged children.

For additional information, tools, and resources to support getting all children caught up on their routine vaccinations, check out CDC's [Let's RISE](#) webpage.

Help us protect children by doing what you can to get kids caught up on recommended vaccines.

Sincerely,



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