

Nine Practical Ways to Improve Clinic Immunization Rates

1. Voice your strong support of immunizations.

In this environment of Internet communications and vaccine safety concerns, it's all the more important to express your belief in immunizations with parents. Your recommendations are their most valuable advice.

There are many excellent resources available to help respond to parents' concerns. You can start with the MDH fact sheet, *Reliable Sources of Immunization Information* at www.health.state.mn.us/immunize (click on Vaccine Safety and then on Vaccine Safety Basics).

2. Participate in MIIC.

The more you use MIIC, our statewide immunization registry, the better it will serve you. Right now, there are 2,960 active organizations in MIIC. Using MIIC can save valuable time by helping you:

- Retrieve immunization records from other clinics or schools
- Check patients' immunization status before appointments
- Generate reminder-recall letters
- Track vaccine inventory
- Keep accurate, readable, up-to-date immunization records
- Find out what your immunization rates are; call your regional MIIC coordinator for instructions (You will find a list of regional coordinators at www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/immunize/registry/map.html.)

3. Don't let cost be a barrier: promote the MnVFC program.

Make sure parents know they may be eligible for free or low cost shots through MnVFC (Minnesota Vaccines for Children). Children should not be left vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases if their parents can't afford shots or they don't have full insurance coverage.

Post colorful MnVFC posters in your clinic waiting rooms.

Provide an eligibility self-check list to patients/parents waiting for vaccinations.

4. Implement standing orders.

5. Follow true contraindications.

Be aware of true contraindications for vaccination and dispel common misconceptions among staff and patients. In a 2009 survey we found there is much room for improvement here. For example, 39 percent of providers said they did not vaccinate when a patient presents with mild illness.

These are NOT true contraindications:

- X Minor acute illness
- X Current antibiotic therapy
- X Breastfeeding
- X Pregnancy of child's mother
- X Giving two or more shots at separate sites



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6. Offer immunization-only clinics at alternate times and advertise them.

7. Minimize missed opportunities for immunization.

- Follow ACIP and AAP recommendations regarding contraindications and simultaneous administration of vaccines.
- Look for opportunities to vaccinate, e.g., during acute care visits and/or when siblings are in the office.

8. Use the accelerated ACIP immunization schedule.

It will bring children back on schedule if they fall behind. You will find it on the back of Minnesota's Recommended Childhood Immunization Schedule.

9. Keep up to date on immunization recommendations.

- Make sure you have a current copy of CDC's Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases (the Pink Book) if you administer immunizations. It's the most essential of all the many resources available. For more information, go to CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/default.htm.
- Subscribe to email updates on the MDH website, www.health.state.mn.us; click on "e-Subscribe" in the upper right corner. Subscription choices include MnVFC, weekly influenza activity, the Immunization Practices Improvement program (IPI), Got Your Shots Newsletter, and others.
- Subscribe to the "IAC Express," the free weekly email newsletter published by the Immunization Action Coalition (IAC) at www.immunize.org/express.

- Subscribe to pages on CDC's website at https://service.govdelivery.com/service/multi_subscribe.html?code=USCDC. You can sign up to receive emails alerting you to web updates of VISs, immunization schedules, vaccine.