

August is National Immunization Awareness Month (NIAM)

Help us educate and bring awareness to the importance of getting caught up on routine vaccinations. Many people missed their routine check-ups and immunizations because of the COVID-19 pandemic. With kids going back to school this fall, and many adults going back to the workplace, it is more important than ever to get people back on track with routine immunizations. CDC has a variety of resources to help. Tips for how health care professionals can reach parents can be found at Toolkit for Reaching Healthcare Professionals (www.cdc.gov/vaccines/events/niam/hcp/communication-toolkit.html). For resources on reaching patients and parents, check out Educational Resources for Parents and Patients (www.cdc.gov/vaccines/events/niam/parents/educational-resources.html). Learn more below about the troubling gaps we are seeing for our pediatric populations.

The importance of getting kids back on track

An analysis of MIIC data shows a decrease in the percentage of two-year-olds and 13-year-olds fully vaccinated. The following data highlight that we still are seeing a gap in pediatric vaccination coverage during the pandemic.

Coverage for two-year-olds dropped by 2 percentage points for MMR, Varicella, and DTaP, when comparing the 2019 to the 2020 cohort. In the first half of 2021, this trend has continued as coverage among children who have turned two years old has dropped by 4-5 percentage points for MMR, Varicella, and DTaP when comparing the 2021 to the 2020 cohort. We saw similar decreases in coverage for the vaccines required for 13-year-olds. Tdap and meningococcal coverage dropped by 2 percentage points. So far in 2021, adolescent vaccine coverage among adolescents who have turned 13 has not rebounded and remains similar to 2020.

2021 back-to-school immunization campaign

An MDH adolescent routine vaccination catch-up campaign with the slogan “Keep your teen on track” will launch in August. The campaign will focus on large vaccine coverage gaps seen among 7th graders in Minnesota due to the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 vaccination for kids 12 years and older will also be promoted. We are stressing the importance of getting adolescents up-to-date on the vaccines they missed before the school year begins. Activities will include a MnVFC provider mailing; a statewide adolescent reminder-recall postcard sent to 12- and 13-year-olds who need Tdap, MenACWY, HPV, or COVID-19 vaccine(s); diverse media promotion; and social media. Please continue to identify and schedule adolescent patients that are due or overdue for recommended vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccine.

Use MIIC to identify children who are behind and call them to the clinic for vaccination. MIIC’s assessment reports and client follow-up functions are available to all user roles of immunization providers. Users can track childhood immunization rates for the provider’s population, generate a list of due and overdue patients to send reminders, and manage which patients are associated with their clinics. We encourage you to run a report to help get kids back on track with their immunizations. Learn more about MIIC resources in the next article below.

Updated MIIC user guidance and training resources

The Minnesota Immunization Information Connection (MIIC) User Guidance and Training Resources web page is available for providers and MIIC partners. The web page includes step-by-step instructions and resources for all of the different functions in MIIC. All of our training materials and resources on the web page have been recently updated including the user guidance training documents, MIIC webinar videos, and video guides with accompanying video transcripts.

Please refer to MIIC User Guidance and Training Resources (www.health.state.mn.us/people/immunize/miic/train/index.html) to access these resources and more.

Enroll as a COVID-19 vaccine provider

If you serve children and adolescents in your clinic, please consider registering to be a COVID-19 vaccine provider if you haven’t already. In addition to Pfizer vaccine, age authorization expansion will likely occur for the other COVID-19 vaccine products. We also expect age authorization expansion down to 5 years of age later in the year. Parents often feel the most comfortable getting their children vaccinated at their child’s clinic. Learn how to enroll at COVID-19 Vaccine Provider Registration (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/vaxreg.html).

MnVFC flu distribution

We expect Minnesota Vaccines for Children (MnVFC) 2021-22 flu vaccine will begin shipping to providers within the next several weeks. We will send out a MnVFC Announcement when flu vaccine distribution begins. You can check on the status of your flu prebook requests at any time by logging into MIIC and selecting “manage special event vaccine.”

COVID-19 vaccine resources for providers

As more providers join efforts in vaccinating against COVID-19, we would like to remind you of the resources we have available. There are a variety of resources for health care providers and partners at COVID-19 Vaccine Providers (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/provider.html). This page houses all of our guidance documents, such as our provider guide and technical information on transporting and preparing COVID-19 vaccines. There are also several forms and templates that can be found on this page, like our screening and agreement template and vaccine protocols.

Find tips for promoting pediatric COVID-19 vaccine and strategies for achieving vaccine equity in Minnesota on this page as well.

Stay up-to-date on material updates and new content by subscribing to our COVID-19 vaccine provider bulletin at COVID-19 Vaccine Provider Updates (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/vaxbulletin.html).

If you are looking for resources to share with patients on COVID-19 vaccine, you can find information, fact sheets, and videos on About COVID-19 Vaccine (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/basics.html).