



Illinois Chapter

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American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



Immunization Newsletter

February 2023

National Vaccine Coverage among Kindergarteners Continues to Decrease

During the 2021-22 school year, national vaccine coverage among kindergarten students dropped 1%, from 94% to **93%**. This is in addition to the drop that occurred during the 2020-2021 school year from 95% to 94%. In the most recent school year, the exemption rate was only 2.6%. These decreases are likely related to missed well-child visits during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns and may be indicative of expanding vaccine hesitancy and misinformation fueled by COVID-19 vaccine concerns. Fortunately, [vaccination coverage levels by age 24 months](#) have not experienced a decrease, though disparities are seen based on race, health insurance status, and area of residence (rural, urban, etc.). In order to increase vaccination rates, [the AAP suggests](#) a strong provider vaccine recommendation, implementing reminder recall strategies, and promoting the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program, to ensure that un- and underinsured kids have access to all recommended vaccines.



VFC/CHIP Blended Vaccine Inventory

On 1/14/23, Illinois (including Chicago) switched to a blended inventory of Vaccines for Children (VFC) & Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) vaccines. ICAAP hosted a webinar with IDPH and CDPH to detail these changes. If you have questions about this blended inventory, check out the webinar recordings and additional resources [here](#).

Vaccine Updates Corner:

1. Updated Statistics for Vaccine Acceptance & Hesitancy

A [study](#) among 23 countries has found that global COVID-19 vaccine acceptance is at about 80%, an increase of 5.2% from June 2021. In the US specifically, acceptance is also at about 80%, suggesting that the rates of acceptance and hesitancy in the states are in line with that in other Western countries.

This said, parental hesitancy to vaccinate their children is at 33.1%, which is **down** from 46% in 2021. A strong provider recommendation remains essential in vaccinating both kids and adults.



2. Addressing Vaccine Disinformation

[Disinformation](#) about COVID-19 vaccines continues to circulate, particularly about the vaccines causing sudden deaths and other severe health issues. In fact, it's expected that a [very small group of people](#) are responsible for the majority of disinformation circulating on the internet. However, it remains clear that the benefits of vaccination outweigh the risks, that COVID-19 infection is more likely to cause severe health issues and deaths, and that COVID-19 vaccines save lives. As providers, it is important to [understand circulating disinformation](#) and have productive conversations with hesitant patients.

3. Encouraging Bivalent Boosters

Rates of vaccination with a COVID-19 bivalent booster are lagging in the U.S., with only [15%](#) of the population having received an updated dose. In Illinois, only about 19% of residents have received an updated booster. Among adults, the [most common reasons](#) for not receiving a bivalent booster include lack of awareness about eligibility and overconfidence in immunity. On the other hand, the most common reasons for remaining up-to-date include to protect oneself, avoid severe disease, and to protect others. That being said, vaccine providers should be prepared to discuss booster benefits and the impacts of waning immunity with their patients.



4. The Future of COVID-19 Vaccines

The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA's) Vaccine and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC) met on 1/26/23 to [discuss the future of COVID-19 vaccines](#). Ultimately, the committee determined that the same bivalent vaccine composition should be used for all COVID-19 vaccines doses (primary series and boosters). The committee also wants to simplify the dosing schedule, but no recommended changes were voted on. Finally, the possibility of applying the annual flu vaccine model to COVID-19 vaccines was discussed, but again, no formal votes were cast regarding this process. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will meet to discuss COVID-19 vaccines on [February 24th](#), where some of these topics may gain additional movement. You can also learn more about these topics from a webinar [recording](#) and [Q&A](#) with Your Local Epidemiologist, Katelyn Jetelina.



COVID-19 Vaccinator Hero Award

ICAAP would like to recognize and celebrate the amazing pediatric teams across the state that have been doing incredible work around COVID-19 vaccine administration. This month, please join us in congratulating the staff at **Northwestern Children's Practice** for giving over 8,000 doses since February 2021!

Thank you for all your hard work!

Influenza-Associated Pediatric Deaths in the US

As we move further away from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, pediatric flu [deaths continue to increase](#). 91 influenza-associated pediatric deaths have been reported so far from the 2022-2023 season, compared to 45 total deaths reported in the 2021-2022 season. Vaccination is essential to preventing pediatric flu deaths.

Upcoming Events

Vaccination Experience Webinar

Immunize.org is hosting a webinar on "Improving the Vaccination Experience: Reducing Pain and Anxiety for Children and Adults" on February 28th at 12 p.m. CST.

[Register here.](#)

Immunizations Webinar

Join our next immunizations webinar on Wednesday, February 22nd at 12 p.m. Dr. Peter Hotez will discuss updates on vaccine hesitancy and misinformation.

[Register here.](#)

I-VAC Office Hours

I-VAC [office hours](#) are now being held monthly. Office hours offer an opportunity for you to ask any COVID-19 vaccine implementation questions in a casual, virtual setting. Join us for the whole hour or for as long as you need assistance!

The next session will be held **Wednesday, March 1 at 12:00 p.m. with Dr. Andrea Kane.**

Registration is not required – just click [this link](#) to join.

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