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Getting Essential Childhood and Adolescent Vaccines During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This information is intended to help you understand the importance of returning to regular health care visits as soon as it is safe to do so. You should consult your doctor or a health care provider for guidance.

*(This page is **not** about vaccines that can help protect against COVID-19. For more on this, see [COVID-19 Vaccines in People With Cancer](#)¹.)*

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, well-child visits and annual physicals, including visits for routine vaccinations, were largely put on hold to prioritize urgent needs and reduce the risk of the spread of COVID-19. This has led to a significant drop in childhood and adolescent vaccinations, including for the prevention of HPV infection that can lead to six types of cancers.

Since most health care systems offer safe, in-person appointments, including for vaccination, it is important to catch up on all recommended vaccinations as soon as possible.

Routine vaccines are very important

Parents should schedule their children's yearly well-child visits as soon as possible if they have delayed doing so, because [well-child visits are essential to good health](#)². Missed vaccinations could put your child at risk for preventable diseases and might also delay your child's return to in-person learning this fall. Since families and clinics typically get busy during the summer, it is best to schedule these visits as soon as you can.

While some visits can be done by telehealth, vaccines must be given in person. Clinics have safety procedures in place to protect your child. It is very important that children and adolescents are vaccinated against vaccine-preventable diseases, including tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough, [HPV³](#), and the flu. Parents should continue to protect their children from these diseases during the pandemic. Learn more about the [risks of postponing vaccines from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC⁴\)](#).

Vaccines can be given safely

The CDC is asking health care providers to work with families to keep children up to date with all recommended vaccinations. The National HPV Vaccination Roundtable has created an [infographic⁵](#) and a series of [videos for parents⁶](#) to address safety concerns. The [American Academy of Pediatrics⁷](#) encourages families to reach out to their family pediatrician for support during COVID-19. Together, parents and providers can help protect children from vaccine-preventable diseases.

The CDC has [recommendations for health care facilities⁸](#) to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission:

- Facilities and clinics should be available to answer questions from parents and patients by phone or web portal before and after the appointment.
- Patients should be pre-screened for COVID-related symptoms before appointments.
- Appointments should be scheduled to allow for at least 6 feet of physical distancing between patients, and longer appointment times, if needed, to avoid crowding in waiting rooms and patient care areas.
- There should be limits on visitors other than patients and their parents into the health care facility.
- If not done in front of you, the facility or clinic should be able to tell you how often equipment and surfaces are disinfected and cleaned.
- Everyone, including patients, parents, and staff, should wear a face cover or face mask, where appropriate. There should be frequent handwashing and use of hand sanitizer by staff, patients, and visitors.

Children in need can receive vaccines for free

All children should have access to needed vaccines regardless of their family's ability to

pay. If your family lost insurance coverage, your child will be covered by the federal [Vaccines for Children program](#)⁹. If you need affordable care, you can find a [HRSA-funded health center](#).¹⁰ If you have insurance, your child's routine vaccines are covered as preventive care under the Affordable Care Act.

We hope this information provides useful guidance as you consider when and how to safely resume well-child visits that include vaccination.

As always, we remain available to discuss your questions and concerns. Live chat is available through our website or you can call us anytime, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/physical-side-effects/low-blood-counts/infections/covid-19-vaccines-in-people-with-cancer.html
2. www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/visit/vaccination-during-COVID-19.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fvaccines%2Fparents%2Fwhy-vaccinate%2Fwell-child-visits.html
3. www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-causes/infectious-agents/hpv.html
4. www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/why-vaccinate/risks-delaying-vaccines.html
5. http://hprvroundtable.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/GBOT-for-Parents_FINAL.pdf
6. www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpB8X9MugZYbsF7pHGZe48w2_Ya1Kg4JZ
7. www.healthychildren.org/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Is-it-OK-to-call-the-pediatrician-during-COVID-19-even-if-Im-not-sure-my-child-is-sick.aspx
8. www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-hcf.html
9. www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/parents/index.html
10. <http://www.findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/>

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Written by

The American Cancer Society medical and editorial content team
(www.cancer.org/cancer/acs-medical-content-and-news-staff.html)

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