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## Vaccine Needs Assessment

A Series on Standards for Adult Immunization Practice



**Assessment is the critical first step in ensuring that your adult patients get the vaccines they need for protection against serious vaccine-preventable diseases.**

**As a standard of care—whether you provide vaccines or not—you should assess your patients' immunization status at *every clinical encounter* and strongly recommend vaccines that they need.**

**Assessing your patients' vaccination status at every clinical encounter will decrease missed opportunities to vaccinate.<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>**

- Many adults do not schedule annual check-ups or come in for preventive services, therefore it is critical to assess vaccine status whenever they do come in for a visit.
- Some vaccines are indicated for adults based on factors other than age, making it important to assess regularly whether your patients have had lifestyle, health, or occupational changes that may prompt the need for additional vaccines.
- Vaccine recommendations for adults change over time, and your patients may not be up to date with the latest recommendations.

**There are simple ways to implement routine vaccine assessment into your office patient flow.**

- Give patients a vaccine assessment form at check-in.
- Include standing orders or protocols for nursing staff to assess and administer needed vaccines.
- Integrate vaccine prompts into electronic medical records.

*See back for more tips and resources.*

**Routinely assessing patient vaccination status will make a difference.**

Adults think immunization is important, but most don't know which vaccines they need throughout their lives. Research indicates that your recommendation is the strongest predictor of whether patients get vaccinated.<sup>4</sup> Implement policies to ensure your patients' vaccination needs are routinely reviewed.

**For information on insurance coverage of vaccines for adults, visit: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/adults](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/adults)**

**U.S. vaccination rates for adults are extremely low.**

For example:

- Only 20% of adults 19 years or older have received Tdap vaccination.
- Only 28% of adults 60 years or older have received zoster (shingles) vaccination.
- Only 20% of adults 19 to 64 years old, at high risk, have received pneumococcal vaccination.
- Only 44% of adults 18 years or older had received flu vaccination during the 2014–2015 flu season.

Sources: NHIS 2014 (MMWR 2016; 64(4)), BRFSS 2014–2015 ([www.cdc.gov/flu/fluview](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/fluview))

**For resources and tips on vaccine recommendation, administration, referral, and documentation, visit:**

[www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adultstandards](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adultstandards)

**DON'T WAIT.  
VACCINATE!**



U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention

# Tips for Improving Vaccine Assessment in Your Practice

- **Implement standing orders or protocols.** Routinely incorporate vaccine assessment and vaccination the same way you incorporate measuring weight and blood pressure during patient office visits.  
Examples: [www.immunize.org/standing-orders](http://www.immunize.org/standing-orders)
- **Give your patients a vaccine questionnaire to complete at check-in.** This can help identify vaccines your patients may need based on factors such as upcoming travel or changes in medical conditions.  
Example: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/adults/downloads/patient-intake-form.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/adults/downloads/patient-intake-form.pdf)
- **Use reminders to help your practice stay on top of needed vaccines that are due soon or are overdue.** These reminders can be generated by a computer system (Electronic Health Record) or immunization registries, or you can make a note of needed vaccines on a patient's vaccination chart.  
Example: [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2023.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2023.pdf)
- **Send your patients reminders about missed vaccines or vaccines that are due soon.** This can help keep vaccines on your patients' radar and encourage them to stay up to date.  
Example: <http://www.adultvaccination.org/professional-resources/adult/appointment-reminder-cards.html>
- **Review how your practice does in keeping your patients up to date on vaccines.** This can be done by reviewing a sample of patients' charts or analyzing electronic health record data for your practice. Learn more about the CDC Comprehensive Clinic Assessment Software Application (CoCASA) tool here: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/cocasa/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/cocasa/index.html)

CDC's recommended Adult Immunization Schedule is available in various formats, including an online scheduling tool and mobile phone application:

[www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules)

To learn more about evidence-based strategies for improving vaccination rates, visit: [www.TheCommunityGuide.org/vaccines](http://www.TheCommunityGuide.org/vaccines)

Don't forget to review contraindications and precautions for vaccination when assessing your patients' vaccine needs.

Learn more: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/admin/contraindications-adults.html>

#### References:

1. Hurley LP, Bridges CB, Harpaz R, Allison MA. US physicians survey regarding adult vaccine delivery: Missed opportunities. *Ann Intern Med.* 2014; 160:161-70.
2. Nowalk MP, Zimmerman RK, Feghali J. Missed opportunities for adult immunization in diverse primary care office settings. *Vaccine.* 2004; 22(25-26):3457-63.
3. Nowalk MP, Zimmerman RK, Cleary SM, Bruehlman RD. Missed opportunities to vaccinate older adults in primary care. *J Am Board Fam Pract.* 2005; 18(1):20-7.
4. Johnson DR, Nichol KN, Lipczynski K. Barriers to Adult Immunization. *Am J Med.* 2008; 121:528-535.

For more information and resources on adult immunization,  
visit: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/adults](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/adults)