

# Overview

## A Series on Standards for Adult Immunization Practice



In 2014, the National Vaccine Advisory Committee updated the Standards for Adult Immunization Practice to reflect the critical need for ALL healthcare professionals—whether they provide immunization services or not—to take steps to ensure that adult patients get the vaccines they need.

Patients trust you to give them the best advice on how to protect their health.

Make adult vaccination a standard of care in your practice.

### Why should adult immunization be a priority for your practice?

1. **Your patients are probably not getting the vaccines they need.** Even though most private insurance plans cover the cost of recommended vaccines, adult vaccination rates in the United States are extremely low. Each year, tens of thousands of adults needlessly suffer, are hospitalized, and even die as a result of diseases that could be prevented by vaccines.
2. **Your patients are likely not aware that they need vaccines.** Although adults do believe immunization is important, many don't know which vaccines are recommended for them throughout their lives. Many also report not receiving vaccine recommendations from their healthcare professional.
3. **You play a critical role in ensuring that your patients are fully immunized.** Clinicians are the most valued and trusted source of health information for adults. Your patients rely on you to inform them about the vaccines they need. Research shows that a recommendation from their healthcare professional is the top predictor of patients getting vaccinated.

### 2014 U.S. Adult Vaccination Rates

**Only 20% of adults 19 years or older had received Tdap vaccination.** More than 18,000 cases of whooping cough were provisionally reported in 2015. About five in 100 adults with pertussis are hospitalized and others may have complications, which could include pneumonia. Adults can also spread pertussis to infants, who are at most risk for severe illness and death from this disease.

**Only 28% of adults 60 years or older had received zoster (shingles) vaccination.** Nearly 1 million Americans experience the condition each year, and about half of all cases occur in adults 60 years or older. Older adults are also most likely to experience severe pain from the disease and have postherpetic neuralgia.

**Only 20% of adults 19 to 64 years at high risk had received pneumococcal vaccination.** While coverage among adults 65 years or older is better, there are still many adults left unprotected. About 67 million adults at increased risk for pneumococcal disease remain unvaccinated.

**Only 44% of adults 18 years or older had received flu vaccination during the 2014-2015 flu season.** On average, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized each year from influenza-related complications.

Sources: NHIS 2013, NHIS 2014 (MMWR 2016; 64(4)), BRFSS 2014-2015 ([www.cdc.gov/flu/fluview](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/fluview))

# DON'T WAIT. VACCINATE!



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

# Summary of 2014 Standards for Adult Immunization Practice

## 1. **ASSESS** immunization status of all your patients at every clinical encounter.

- Stay informed about the latest CDC recommendations for immunization of adults.
- Implement protocols in your office to ensure that patients' vaccine needs are routinely reviewed and patients get reminders about vaccines they need.

## 2. Strongly **RECOMMEND** vaccines that patients need.

- Address patient questions and concerns in clear and understandable language.
- Explain the benefits of getting vaccinated and potential costs of getting the diseases they protect against.
- Highlight positive experiences with vaccination (personal or in your practice) to reinforce the benefits and strengthen confidence in vaccination.

## 3. **ADMINISTER** needed vaccines or **REFER** patients to a vaccinating provider.

- For vaccines that you stock, make vaccination services as convenient as possible for your patients.
- For vaccines that you don't stock, refer patients to providers in the area that offer vaccination services.

## 4. **DOCUMENT** vaccines received by your patients.

- Participate in your state's immunization registry to help your office, your patient, and your patients' other providers know which vaccines your patients have had.
- Follow up to confirm that patients received recommended vaccines that you referred them to get from other immunization providers.

## Proven strategies to increase vaccination rates

In a recent survey of U.S. primary care physicians, only 29% of general internists and 32% of family physicians report assessing vaccination status at every visit.

The CDC recommends the following evidence-based strategies for reducing missed opportunities and improving vaccination rates:

**Standing orders** authorize nurses, pharmacists, and other healthcare professionals to assess a patient's immunization status and administer vaccinations according to an approved protocol without the need for examination or direct order from the attending physician.

**Provider reminder interventions**, such as notes in client charts and alerts in electronic medical records, inform providers and their staff that individual patients are due for specific vaccines.

**Immunization Information Systems (IIS)** support patient vaccination status assessment, reminder and recall interventions, and provider assessment and feedback.

[www.TheCommunityGuide.org/vaccines](http://www.TheCommunityGuide.org/vaccines)

All healthcare professionals should also ensure that they, and their practice staff, are up-to-date on their OWN vaccinations per ACIP recommendations and consistent with professional guidelines.

[www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/rec-vac/hcw.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/rec-vac/hcw.html)  
for more information

For more information on the 2014 Standards and resources for improving adult immunization practice, visit: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adultstandards](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adultstandards)