

Call, Don't Cancel Vaccinations during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Parents are understandably nervous about taking their children and adolescents to doctors' offices and health departments right now. Unfortunately, as a result, childhood vaccination rates are dropping dangerously according to the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Public health and immunization organizations emphasize the importance of continued routine vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please read the following advice/recommendations on maintaining immunization schedules during this time:

Call, Don't Cancel:

- Many immunization providers' offices are taking special precautions such as ensuring well children are kept separate from sick children.
- Many providers are limiting the number of people who can accompany a child to their appointment and are taking temperatures of all family members before allowing them into the building.
- Some providers are providing drive-up vaccine programs.
- Before rescheduling any upcoming childhood vaccination or well visit appointments, call your child's healthcare provider to find out if the appointment can remain as scheduled and what precautions they are taking to keep everyone safe from COVID-19.
- Before rescheduling any upcoming vaccination appointments, adults should contact their healthcare provider to discuss whether there is a compelling need to keep the appointment and if the benefit of vaccination outweighs the risk of potentially contracting coronavirus.

If your child's provider is not currently seeing children for well visits and/or vaccinations, ask about plans to catch your child up on their vaccinations:

- Not all provider offices are equipped to separate sick and well children. If that is the case for your child's provider, ask whether there are plans in place to catch children up on vaccines at a later date, before the school year begins.
- Set a reminder on your calendar to check back with your child's healthcare provider in one month to see whether their plans to vaccinate have changed. If stay-at-home orders are still in place, you can always move the reminder on your calendar to the next month.
- If you are an adult who had their vaccination appointment cancelled, set a reminder on your calendar to check back with your healthcare provider and reschedule the appointment.

Don't have insurance? You can still get your child vaccinated. You may also be able to get yourself vaccinated at a lower, or no cost:

- [The Vaccines for Children \(VFC\) program](#) offers free vaccines to families who cannot afford to pay for their children's vaccines (through 19 years of age). There may be other costs associated with the vaccination visit such as an administrative fee or co-pay; however, VFC vaccines cannot be denied to an eligible child if the family cannot afford the fee.
- With so many people out of work and without health insurance, it's important to know you can still keep your child safe.

Many healthcare providers who see children are enrolled in this long-standing, federally funded program. Your provider is likely enrolled already. [Contact North Carolina's VFC Coordinator](#) to find out more about VFC and how to enroll your children.

- If your children (up to 19 years old) need health insurance, they may be eligible for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). CHIP benefits are different in each state, but all states provide comprehensive health insurance for children up to age 19, including vaccinations. [Contact North Carolina's CHIP program](#) for more information.
- Adults that qualify for Medicare or Medicaid may also be able to get their vaccinations at no or a lower cost.
- People of all ages can learn more about paying for vaccinations at Vaccinateyourfamily.org/paying-for-vaccines

Vaccinations are still critical during this pandemic:

- It may seem as if outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases are unlikely with current stay-at-home guidance in many states, including North Carolina. However, as these restrictions are lifted, people will once again visit stores, gather at parties and return to schools and daycares.
- 2019 taught us that outbreaks of diseases such as measles, chickenpox and mumps are only held at bay by vaccines.
- Help us ensure this pandemic is not followed by an increase in cases of vaccine-preventable diseases or a preventable outbreak.

Additional Resources:

[Click here](#) for additional information on childhood immunizations and a complete North Carolina schedule.

[Click here](#) for additional information on adolescent immunizations and a complete North Carolina schedule.

[Click here](#) for additional information on adult immunizations and a complete North Carolina schedule.