

20 Best Practices for Adolescent Immunization

As a family physician, you can have a tremendous influence on the health of your adolescent patients by talking to them and their parents about the importance of recommended vaccinations and emphasizing that immunization is necessary to prevent infection and disease throughout their life.

The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) is committed to collaborating with its members, immunization partners, and other stakeholders to share best practices and develop new resources to help family physicians and other health care professionals improve adolescent immunization rates by reducing barriers, gaps, and missed opportunities.

The AAFP Adolescent Immunization Best Practices Summit was held July 14-15, 2018, in Kansas City, Missouri. Summit participants shared the following best practices for family physicians to improve immunization rates among adolescents 11-18 years of age.

- 1) Identify an immunization champion in your practice to promote strategies for increasing adolescent immunization rates and lead quality improvement projects.
- 2) Promote a unified, practice-wide approach to both receiving vaccines and delivering vaccine recommendations to adolescent patients and their parents.
- 3) Hold in-service staff meetings to educate team members about vaccines for adolescents, correct common misconceptions, and answer questions. Everyone on the clinical team should stay current on information about adolescent immunization.
- 4) Train all new staff members on your practice's processes and protocols for adolescent immunization.
- 5) Require all clinical team members to provide strong recommendations for vaccinating adolescent patients.
- 6) Hold regular team huddles to discuss strategies and tactics for increasing the adolescent immunization rate in your practice and to share challenges and success stories.
- 7) Check your state's Immunization Information System (IIS) to determine the immunization status of your adolescent patients, and upload vaccination updates from your practice to the IIS, if possible.
- 8) Use your electronic health record (EHR) to identify adolescent patients who are due to be vaccinated and to flag needed vaccines prior to office visits. Presenting immunization status as a vital sign is one option for providing a helpful prompt for the clinical team.
- 9) Provide clinical teams with a weekly or monthly report of their adolescent patients who are due for vaccination.
- 10) Set up a reminder or call-back system to encourage adolescent patients to schedule an appointment when they are due for vaccination. For example, send postcard reminders on patients' birthdays at certain age milestones (e.g., 11-12 years of age, 16 years of age) or use your patient portal to send reminders electronically.
- 11) Send a mailing about the flu vaccine to adolescent patients and their parents each fall.

2018 AAFP Adolescent Immunization Best Practices Summit Participants

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AAFP Immunization Partners
American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
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Association of Immunization Managers (AIM)
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Immunization Action Coalition (IAC)
National Association of School Nurses (NASN)
Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (SAHM)

- 12) Provide resources to educate your adolescent patients and their parents about the importance of vaccines and to correct misinformation. For example, place posters and handouts in your exam rooms, post information on your website, or use educational videos. Immunization resources are available from many reputable organizations, including the AAFP, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Immunization Action Coalition (IAC), the American Cancer Society (ACS), and the Highlight on VACCINATIONS 4 TEENS program.
- 13) Train everyone on the clinical team—including nurses and medical assistants—to encourage patients and parents to ask questions about vaccines, listen to their concerns, and answer all of their questions. Consider using personal stories to reassure adolescent patients and their parents.
- 14) Provide needed vaccinations at every clinical encounter, not just at well-child visits, and have vaccines available for adolescent patients who come in to walk-in clinics, urgent care, after-hours care, and same-day visits.
- 15) Implement standing orders to streamline administration of vaccines for adolescent patients.
- 16) Offer vaccination clinics, especially during flu season.
- 17) Ask parents in advance for approval to vaccinate adolescent patients who come in for office visits without a parent.
- 18) Schedule follow-up appointments at the time of the initial vaccination. If a patient is not able to schedule a follow-up appointment that day, add him or her to a recall list.
- 19) Find out if family members in the exam room with an adolescent patient are also due for vaccination. If so, encourage them to schedule an appointment.
- 20) Use immunization record cards from your state's health department.