

# Top Ten Strategies to Increase Adult Immunization Rates

Follow these ten evidence-based strategies to improve adult immunization coverage at your organization.

## 1. Give a Strong Recommendation for Vaccination

Studies show that a provider's strong recommendation positively impacts patient decisions to get vaccinated.<sup>1</sup> When recommending immunizations, begin with a presumptive approach: "There are two pneumococcal vaccines we give to adults over 65. We will be giving you one of those today." If your patient has questions or is hesitant, emphasize why it is important that your patient receive the vaccine today: "I strongly recommend pneumococcal vaccine because it can protect you from diseases like pneumonia. These diseases could be very serious for you now that you are older."<sup>2</sup> If a patient ultimately refuses the vaccine, document the refusal in his/her chart, and add a reminder to ask again at the next visit. See Medscape's [How to Give a Strong Recommendation to Adult Patients Who Require Vaccination](#) and the CDC's [Vaccine Recommendation](#) flyer for more information.

## 2. Make a Strong Referral for Vaccination if not Currently Stocking On-Site

To ensure patients receive needed vaccines off-site, follow these steps:

- a. Establish referral relationships with vaccine providers such as pharmacies in your area.
- b. Assist patients in locating a [local immunization provider](#) that stocks the vaccine and accepts the patient's insurance. For patients with [Medi-Cal Managed Care](#), contact the patient's health plan to identify a local in-network pharmacy.
- c. Create a process to verify patient got vaccinated and document in patient's medical record. Pharmacists are now [required](#) to notify the physician and report any immunizations administered to the California Immunization Registry (CAIR) within 14 days.

## 3. Routinize Patient Reminder/Recall Activities

Reminder/recall systems are cost-effective ways to notify patients that they are due for vaccinations (reminder) or are already behind (recall). Effective reminder/recall systems are conducted by clinic staff on a routine basis (e.g., once a month, within five days after a missed appointment, etc.). Patient lists may be generated through your Electronic Health Record (EHR), [CAIR](#), or using a paper-based "tickler" system. When considering which method(s) to use, consider workflow, cost, and amount of staff time/resources available.

- **Phone calls by staff**
- **Auto-dialers**
- **Text messages** can be tailored to specific patient populations and include educational messages.
- **EHR patient portals** can prompt patients in an email to check their portal, reminding them of vaccinations due.
- **Mail cards/letters** may be printed through your EHR or filled out by the patient to remind them of their next visit/dose in the series.

#### **4. Identify an Immunization Champion**

An immunization champion is a clinical team member who motivates clinic staff to implement strategies aimed at reducing barriers to providing immunizations and improving coverage levels. She/he also supports progress towards meeting clinic immunization goals and regularly shares updates with providers and staff. Consider writing it into their job description, with time devoted to perform their tasks. Appoint an alternate in case the immunization champion is unavailable. Make sure your champion is a true advocate for vaccines!

#### **5. Assess for Needed Vaccines at Every Visit**

Take advantage of patient wellness visits and chronic care visits (in addition to urgent care visits, as feasible) to assess for overdue/due vaccines. Incorporate EHR clinical decision-making guidelines/health maintenance forms into immunization assessment whenever possible.

#### **6. Implement Provider Prompts**

Use provider prompts such as automatic pop-up alerts in your EHR system or chart notes to remind clinic staff that a patient is due/overdue for an immunization(s). Discuss the addition/customization of provider prompts in your EHR system with your leadership team, IT representative, and EHR vendor. Many EHRs have provider prompts pre-installed that can be customized in the office.

#### **7. Give Providers and Staff Feedback and Updates**

Set your clinic immunization coverage goals based on [Healthy People 2020 objectives](#). Track provider progress and benchmark data by routinely assessing immunization rates through your EHR. Share these rates with providers and other staff members to discuss benchmarks met or missed, and plan quality improvement interventions tailored to the needs of your clinic and patients. Post your progress in a prominent place to support friendly competition.

Make time at staff meetings for immunization updates such as changes in [recommendations](#) or best practices to share. Support immunizing staff in attending trainings, such as [CDC's FREE immunization CE courses](#). Create a culture of immunization at your clinic; ensure all staff are aware of how their role supports vaccination.

#### **8. Hold Vaccination Clinics at Convenient Hours**

Accommodate patients with traditional work hours by holding vaccination clinics in the evenings or on Saturdays. Consider holding walk-in or immunization-only visits.

#### **9. Educate Patients and their Family Members**

Educate patients and their families about the safety and benefits of each recommended vaccine and the disease it prevents. Provide [handouts](#) in the patient's preferred language on needed vaccines and the diseases they prevent before upcoming appointments, so they know what to expect. For more patient education resources, visit CDC's [For Educating your Adult Patients](#).

## 10. Manage Patient Records

Accurate immunization records are essential for running reminder-recall reports and coverage reports. Prioritize reminder-recall by flagging medical records for high risk patients (e.g., those with multiple chronic diseases) due/overdue for vaccines. Ensure that: 1) all immunizations (administered and historical) are recorded and reported to CAIR; 2) patients who left your practice are identified as inactive; 3) incorrect data is corrected; and 4) contact information is routinely updated.

### Additional Resources:

- [Top Strategies for Increasing Immunization Rates](#) (Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Immunization Program)
- [How to Give a Strong Recommendation to Adult Patients Who Require Vaccination](#) (Medscape)
- [Standards for Adult Immunization Practice](#) (CDC)
- [Checklist of Activities to Improve Immunization Services](#) (Immunization Action Coalition)

<sup>1</sup>Schneeberg, Amy, et al. "Knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of older adults about pneumococcal immunization, a Public Health Agency of Canada/Canadian Institutes of Health Research Influenza Research Network (PCIRN) investigation." BMC public health 14.1 (2014): 442.

<sup>2</sup>How to Give a Strong Recommendation to Adult Patients Who Require Vaccination - Medscape - Apr 16, 2015.

<sup>3</sup>Ding, Helen, et al. "Influenza vaccination coverage among pregnant women—United States, 2013–14 influenza season." MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 63.37 (2014): 816-21.