



Why Childcare Workers Need Immunizations

Childcare workers play an essential role in protecting the health and safety of our children. Unfortunately, they can also unknowingly spread diseases to children in their care and co-workers. These diseases include hepatitis B virus, influenza, measles, mumps, rubella, pertussis (whooping cough) and varicella (chicken pox) -- all of which can be prevented with vaccines.

- **13-15%** of childcare workers **had evidence of a prior Hepatitis A infection**, a disease transmitted through fecal-oral contamination that is spread person-to-person.¹
- **4.5%** of childcare workers were **susceptible to the Varicella-zoster virus** which causes chicken pox and **31% were unable to remember their immune status** because they could not recall their history of chicken pox.¹
- Only **22%** of childcare workers **received an annual flu shot**.¹
- Approximately **50%** of healthy adults who have influenza **may not experience any symptoms, but are contagious** and continue to spread the virus for up to 10 days.

Children, especially infants, are vulnerable to contracting highly contagious diseases.

- On the CDC recommended immunization schedule, children do not begin receiving their vaccinations, with the exception of hepatitis B, until the age of 2 months and are not fully protected until the age of 6.
- **65%** of Colorado children hospitalized with vaccine-preventable disease are **four years of age or younger**.²
- Some children cannot be vaccinated due to health conditions (i.e. allergies, Leukemia). It is important for people around them to be vaccinated to minimize their risk of exposure to diseases.

Colorado and the U.S. are experiencing high rates and outbreaks of some vaccine-preventable illnesses.

- During the 2014-15 flu season, **six Colorado children died** from complications of influenza, and **3,397 people were hospitalized** in Colorado due to the disease.
- In 2014, a single measles case at Disneyland Theme Park in California resulted in a measles outbreak that spread to 17 U.S. states, Mexico, and Canada and sickened hundreds of people.
- In 2014, Colorado experienced **1,290 reported cases of pertussis (whooping cough)** -- one of the highest in decades.

Childcare workers can be exposed to vaccine-preventable diseases that may result in their own illness, lost time at work, exposure to co-workers and family members, and even death.

- Unimmunized or under immunized childcare workers are at risk of contracting illnesses from the children they work with.
- One study of the 2011 flu season reported an **estimated 100 million lost work days**, nearly **\$7 billion in lost wages** and **32 million missed school days**.
- Childcare workers may have misconceptions about the need for immunizations and their safety. Researchers recommend that employers support childcare worker immunization campaigns.⁴

Adults need vaccines to protect themselves and their loved ones.

- **You never outgrow the need for immunization.** Immunity can begin to fade over time and newer vaccines were not available when some adults were children.
- As we age, we become more susceptible to serious disease caused by common infections.
- **Approximately 42,000 adults and 300 children in the U.S. die each year from vaccine-preventable diseases.**³

Childcare workers have a responsibility to protect the children they care for.

- **“Cocooning” is an immunization strategy promoted by the CDC.** It is a way to protect babies from catching diseases from the people around them – people like their parents, siblings, grandparents, friends, childcare providers, and healthcare providers. Once these people are vaccinated, they are less likely to spread these contagious diseases to the baby. They surround the baby with a “cocoon” of protection against disease until he or she is old enough to get all the doses of vaccine needed to be fully protected.
- **Workplace vaccine policies have been shown to be highly effective in reducing illness.** For example, health care worker influenza vaccinations reduce the risk of spreading influenza to patients in all types of health care settings and has been shown to drastically reduce morbidity (43% reduction in influenza-like illness) and mortality (44% reduction) among geriatric patients in long-term care facilities.

Vaccines are safe and save lives.

- Vaccinations save between 2 and 3 million lives every year.
- The incidence of diseases such as polio, smallpox and haemophilus influenza has been virtually eliminated due to vaccines.⁵
- Before vaccines are licensed in the US, the Food and Drug Administration requires rigorous testing to ensure safety. This process can take 10 years or longer.
- To make sure vaccines continue to be safe, the FDA and the CDC created the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). All doctors must report serious side effects of vaccines to VAERS so they can be studied. The public can also file reports with VAERS.

For more information:

www.ImmunizeforGood.com

www.CDC.gov/vaccines

¹ de Perio MA, Wiegand DM, Evans SM; Low influenza vaccination rates among child care workers in the United States: assessing knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. J Community Health. 2012 Apr;37(2):272-81. doi: 10.1007/s10900-011-9478-z.

² Armon C, Todd J; Vaccine-preventable Diseases in Colorado's Children. Children's Hospital Colorado Contagious Comments. 2012.

³ HealthyPeople.gov; 2020 Topics and Objectives: Overview of Immunizations and Infectious Diseases.

⁴ K. A. Bright, K. Calabro; Child care workers and workplace hazards in the United States: Overview of research and implications for occupational health professionals; Occup. Med. Vol. 49, No. 7, pp. 427-437, 1999.

⁵ HealthyPeople.gov; 2020 Topics and Objectives: Overview of Immunizations and Infectious Diseases.

⁵ CDC, MMWR. 1999;48:241-243