



Playing Vaccine Catch-Up This Summer

Summer vacation often gives students of all ages a break from homework and classes. But, for healthcare professionals, summer appointments present an opportunity to educate young patients and parents about their recommended vaccine schedule.

Due to the communal nature of schools and universities, close contact is common, putting students at high risk of contracting and spreading diseases like mumps, measles, pertussis and the flu. Providers can help patients catch up on their vaccines before they return to school to fulfill state-mandated immunization requirements and to protect patients and their fellow students from vaccine-preventable diseases.

MMR

In response to an uptick in the number of mumps and measles outbreaks in the US, the [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\) recommended](#) a third dose of the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine in October, 2017. The administration of a third dose is recommended for anyone previously vaccinated with two doses of the vaccine and for anyone identified to be at risk during an outbreak; students in close-contact settings like schools and universities are especially vulnerable in these cases.

According to [ACIP direction](#), public health authorities should deliver specific recommendations to providers on when third doses should be administered, but in the meantime, providers can review patient histories at medical appointments to check the status of their MMR immunizations.

DTaP and Tdap

In 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported more than 48,000 cases of pertussis (whooping cough), the [highest number since 1955](#). While the number of cases has decreased in the past few years, pertussis continues to be a threat for patients of all ages. In order to mitigate the spread of the respiratory disease, the [CDC recommends](#) pertussis vaccination for all babies, children, preteens, teens, pregnant woman and adults who have not received the vaccine already and are able to receive vaccines. The CDC recommends diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis vaccine (DTaP) for children younger than seven years old, and adult Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis (Tdap) for those seven years of age or older.

Like many vaccines, the timely [adherence to the pertussis vaccine schedule is critical](#) to protecting children from the infection. However, [vaccine schedules may be postponed](#) if a child is ill or unable to receive vaccinations at the time of an appointment. Providers can consult [catch-up guides from the CDC](#) to help patients get back on track.

Flu Vaccine

During the summer months, the flu season may not always be a healthcare priority. Yet, summer is a great time for providers to begin conversations about the flu vaccine. According to the CDC, it takes about two weeks after vaccination for flu-fighting antibodies to develop; the [agency recommends](#) that individuals receive the vaccine by the end of October. Unless a patient presents contraindications to the flu vaccine, [ACIP has advised](#) that individuals aged six months and older receive a flu vaccine, in order to protect themselves and others from the virus.

Adherence to vaccine schedules not only ensures that patients comply with their [state's school entry requirements](#), it also ensures that they are better protected against highly contagious illnesses, such as measles, mumps, pertussis and the flu. By playing catch-up this summer, providers can help set up young patients for another year of success.

For more information, please contact Cindy Berenson or Jeff Winokur at 800-741-2044 or info@atlantichealthpartners.com.