



## Importance of Catching Children Up on Recommended Vaccinations

Date: November 28, 2022

**Public Health Message Type:** ☐ Alert ☒ Advisory ☐ Update ☐ Information

**Intended Audience:** ☒ All public health partners ☒ Health care providers ☒ Infection preventionists  
☒ Local health departments ☒ Schools/child care centers ☒ ACOs  
☐ Animal health professionals ☐ Other:

### Key Points or Updates:

- (1) During the 2020-2021 school year, there was a drop in kindergarten immunization coverage both nationally and in New Jersey.
- (2) In 2021, a record high of nearly 40 million children missed a measles vaccine dose: 25 million children missed their first dose, and an additional 14.7 million children missed their second dose.
- (3) Drops in immunization coverage leave children vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases which could spread easily in congregate settings such as child care and school.
- (4) Surges in pediatric illnesses can place further strain on healthcare system.
- (5) Protect children by making sure they catch up on all recommended vaccinations.

### Action Items:

- (1) Health care providers should maintain vigilance for measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases.
- (2) Efforts must be made to ensure all children are up to date on all recommended vaccinations, including the COVID-19 vaccine and the updated booster dose.

### Contact Information:

Barbara Montana, MD, MPH, FACP  
Medical Director  
Communicable Disease Service  
[Barbara.Montana@doh.nj.gov](mailto:Barbara.Montana@doh.nj.gov)  
609-826-5964

---

Help us protect children by doing what you can to get kids caught up on recommended vaccines. During the 2020–2021 school year, [vaccination coverage](#)<sup>1</sup> among kindergarteners nationwide dropped more than one percent. NJ saw a similar drop in coverage for kindergarteners meeting all immunization requirements.<sup>2</sup> With most schools now back to in-person learning, efforts must be made to ensure that all school-aged children are up to date on their routine vaccines, have received recommended COVID-19 vaccines, and routine vaccination coverage is equitably distributed. A record high of nearly 40 million

children worldwide missed a measles vaccine dose in 2021 due to hurdles created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the [WHO and the CDC said in a joint report](#)<sup>3</sup>. There are no reported cases of [measles in NJ](#)<sup>4</sup> for 2022; however, health care providers should maintain vigilance for measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases. Getting children caught up on recommended vaccines is especially important given the recent case of polio in New York State, and a surge in pediatric illnesses due to respiratory viruses that is straining our healthcare system.

CDC's [call to action](#)<sup>5</sup> outlined the steps that health care providers and families can take to encourage catch up vaccination and protect children's health.

#### References:

1. Seither R, Laury J, Mugerwa-Kasujja A, Knighton CL, Black CL. Vaccination Coverage with Selected Vaccines and Exemption Rates Among Children in Kindergarten — United States, 2020–21 School Year. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2022;71:561–568. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7116a1>.
2. New Jersey Department of Health. Immunization Status/Exemption Reports. <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/imm-status-reports/>.
3. World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Joint News Release. Nearly 40 million children are dangerously susceptible to growing measles threat. <https://www.who.int/news/item/23-11-2022-nearly-40-million-children-are-dangerously-susceptible-to-growing-measles-threat>. Accessed on November 25, 2022.
4. New Jersey Department of Health Communicable Disease Service. Measles. <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/measles.shtml>.
5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. CDC Call to Action: Add Routine & COVID-19 Vaccinations to the Back-to-School Checklist. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/clinical-resources/downloads/safe-return-school.pdf>.

#### Resources:

1. New Jersey Immunization Network. Keeping Children Safe & Healthy: A Review of Current Immunization and School Guidance. Recorded September 22, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FO2FNJKIb9M>.
2. New Jersey Department of Health Vaccine Preventable Disease Program. Immunization Requirements. [https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/imm\\_requirements/](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/imm_requirements/).
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Recommended and Catch-up Immunization Schedules. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/index.html>.