



Iowa Public Health Association

– The voice of public health in Iowa

SUPPORT A COMPREHENSIVE IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM

The Issue:

Immunization has been one of the most successful and safest public health measures available to populations worldwide, with an unparalleled record of disease reduction and prevention. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics and many other professional organizations recommend vaccinations from birth throughout the adult years to provide a lifetime of protection from vaccine-preventable diseases. IPHA concurs with these recommendations and believes in the effectiveness and safety of vaccines. All Iowans should receive recommended immunizations according to the schedule published by the CDC and ACIP.

Vaccine-preventable diseases cause long-term illness, hospitalization and death. Each year, in the U.S., an average of 200,000 people are hospitalized due to influenza, 800,000 to 1.4 million suffer from chronic hepatitis B infections and 14 million become newly infected with Human Papillomavirus. Maintaining high vaccination coverage rates is important for reducing disease while averting direct and indirect costs to society. The U.S. spends nearly \$27 billion annually treating four vaccine-preventable diseases in adults over the age of 50: influenza, pertussis, pneumococcal disease, and shingles.

While there is considerable focus on pediatric vaccination rates, throughout the nation, adolescent and adult vaccination rates lag behind. Lower immunization rates among adolescents and adults reflect the difficulties of providing clinical preventive services to these age groups. The 2016 National Immunization Survey found only 74.9% of 13–17 year-olds received meningococcal and 89.2% received Tdap vaccines. Even more troubling are the rates of HPV vaccination, with 64.4% of females and 57.2% of males receiving at least one dose, and only 47.4% of females and 43.8% of males with a complete series.

A more comprehensive and integrated approach to immunizations across the lifespan will minimize these deficits that imperil the health of those who currently remain under-immunized, especially those too young or too immune-compromised to be vaccinated. Maintaining herd immunity in the community keeps everyone protected. Herd immunity is the percentage of vaccinated individuals needed in a population to prevent a disease from spreading. The increase in life expectancy during the 20th century is largely due to improvements in child survival; this increase is associated with reductions in infectious disease mortality, due largely to immunization. However, infectious diseases remain a major cause of illness, disability, and death. Immunization recommendations in the U.S. currently target 17 vaccine-preventable diseases across the lifespan.

Policy Solutions:

- Support strategies designed to strengthen and sustain public health and improve the health of communities through immunization programs across the lifespan:
 - Evidence-based strategies include: utilizing Iowa's Immunization Registry Information System (IRIS); using reminder-recall systems, removing administrative and financial barriers to vaccination, using standing orders for vaccination; [requirements for childcare, school, and college attendance](#); home visits; client or family incentive rewards; community-based interventions; and interventions combined with WIC programming.

