

# ImmuNews

Wisconsin Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program Newsletter



## Flu Vaccine Expiration Reminders

- Vaccine cannot be returned until after it expires. Any return requests submitted prior to the expiration of vaccine will be denied. You may return other expired vaccine with the expired flu.
- Once expired, you can remove the vaccine from the refrigerator and follow the instructions on the return form.
- Do not enter doses as wastage in WIR unless it truly was wasted such as drawn but not administered.
- Please allow 2–3 weeks for processing.

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# DHS Announces 2026 BigShot Recipients

The Wisconsin BigShot award is an annual recognition that celebrates Vaccines for Children Program providers who are leading the way in protecting children's health by ensuring their pediatric patients are up-to-date on their vaccinations. This year, the Wisconsin Immunization Program has recognized 162 providers for their high immunization coverage levels.



According to data from the Wisconsin Immunization Registry, the providers receiving this award had high vaccination coverage levels in the following four categories:

- 90% or more of patients between 24–36 months of age up to date on their routine 4:3:1:3:3:1:4 vaccine schedule.
- 80% or more of patients between 13–17 years of age up to date on Tdap, Meningococcal, and have completed the HPV series.
- 95% or more of patients had at least 1 dose of MMR vaccine by 24 months of age.
- 95% or more of patients by 6 years of age had 2 doses of MMR vaccine.

Check out the list of award winners who chose to have their information shared publicly on the [DHS BigShot award webpage](#).



Congratulations to all the BigShot winners! Thank you for keeping Wisconsin's children healthy.

# Summer Reminders

## School and Vaccination Rates

Preparations are being made by parents, schools, and providers to have a successful start to a new school year. One important item is getting the students up to date on age-appropriate immunizations.

Vaccinating students not only protects the child getting vaccinated, but also the community around them. It reduces illness and chances of outbreaks and missed school days. Vaccines are a shared responsibility of the parents, providers, and public health. Vaccines are safe and effective and have undergone rigorous research and processes before being recommended.

According to CDC, immunization rates have decreased nationally among school age children since the pandemic in 2019. The rates for Wisconsin follow this national trend and are among the lowest rates in the country. The amount of religious and personal conviction waivers used in schools have increased from previous years contributing to Wisconsin's low rates. It is imperative that children and adolescents get caught up before they head back to school this fall. Providers and schools play an important role in these efforts.

## Recommended Vaccination Schedules and Resources

Information about [recommended vaccine schedules](#) for all Wisconsinites can be found on the DHS webpage Recommended Vaccination Schedules for Wisconsinites.

DHS continues to endorse the vaccine recommendations made by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), and American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). Providers should continue to follow evidence-based vaccine recommendations from AAP and other professional medical organizations.

# Why are Routine Vaccines Important for Travelers?

## International Travel



Because most U.S. children get routine vaccines, many vaccine-preventable diseases, such as [measles](#), [mumps](#), or [chickenpox](#), are not common in the United States. If you are not vaccinated, international travel increases your chances of getting and spreading diseases that are not common in the United States. Many popular destinations still have outbreaks of [measles](#) and other vaccine-preventable diseases.

## Travel in the United States

### TDAP

TDAP is important for any type of travel (both international and domestic). It will provide you protection against pertussis (whooping cough), a severe respiratory illness; diphtheria, a highly contagious bacterial infection, and Tetanus (commonly referred to as “lockjaw”), which is found in soil and enters the body through cuts, puncture wounds, or scrapes. If injured while exploring the outdoors, this vaccine will help protect you.

### Measles

With ongoing measles outbreaks globally and within the U.S., discuss summer travel plans with patients now and ensure they are up to date on their vaccines, particularly MMR vaccine.



# Meningococcal Disease and Vaccination

## About Meningococcal Disease

Meningococcal disease is a serious bacterial illness that can cause meningitis (brain and spinal cord infections) and bacteremia (blood infections). In the United States between 200 and 400 people get the disease each year, and about 10 to 15 out of 100 people die from it. Of those who survive, up to one out of five will have permanent disabilities, such as deafness, brain damage, loss of limbs, or seizures. A person with meningococcal disease may become seriously ill very quickly. Antibiotics can treat meningococcal infections but sometimes can't be given soon enough to help.

## Preventing Meningococcal Disease

Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to prevent meningococcal disease. There are three types of meningococcal vaccines, and each type helps protect against different serogroups (strains) of meningococcal bacteria.

- MenACWY vaccines - Protect against serogroups A, C, W, and Y
- MenB vaccines - Protect against serogroup B
- Pentavalent or MenABCWY vaccines - Protect against serogroups A, B, C, W, and Y

All 11- to 12-year-olds **should get a MenACWY vaccine** followed by a booster dose at 16 years old.

MenACWY is a **school vaccination requirement** in Wisconsin for students entering seventh grade, and a booster dose for eligible students entering 12th grade.

Teens **may get a MenB vaccine**, preferably at 16-18 years old.

Review the [recommendations for meningococcal vaccine](#) and [talking points about meningococcal vaccines](#) for speaking with patients.

# Vaccine MythBusters: Immune System

## MYTH:

Giving too many immunizations can “overwhelm” the immune system—it’s better to space them out.

## Fact

Getting more than one vaccine at the same time hasn’t been shown to have a negative effect on your body’s immune system. Considering how many pathogens we interact with daily; our immune systems are built to handle a lot.

## Fact

Spacing out immunizations often result in more office visits, more injections, and, as a result, higher out-of-pocket expenses.

## Fact

Additionally, the vaccine schedule has been carefully planned by scientists and doctors to ensure that each person gets the maximum protection from vaccines before they’re most at risk for diseases.

## Fact

For example, babies receive their first vaccine against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis right around the time the protection they get from their mothers’ antibodies fade. Not following the recommended vaccine schedule can put children at risk for suffering from dangerous diseases. There are also many advantages to receiving several vaccines at the same time: fewer visits to the clinic; more opportunity to complete the recommended doses on time; and fewer injections when using combined vaccines, like MMR, which offers protection against mumps, measles and rubella.



# Updated VFC Flyer and Parent and Patients Webpage

The Wisconsin [VFC for Parents and Patients webpage](#) and the VFC Flyer have been updated.

The VFC for Parents and Patients webpage now includes new resources, FAQs, and an updated provider location map. You can check your location's contact information on the map and reach out to the VFC program if any adjustments are needed.

The updated [VFC Flyer](#) highlights VFC eligibilities and references the updated VFC webpage with more details. The flyer is available in English, Chinese, Hindi, Hmong, Pennsylvania Dutch, Somali, Spanish and American Sign Language (ASL).

We encourage you to direct parents and guardians to the updated webpage and to distribute or display the VFC flyers in your waiting areas and community locations to help promote opportunities for families to access cost-free vaccines.



Worried about the cost of vaccines for your children?

You may qualify for free vaccines through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program.

Children younger than age 19 who are in at least one of the following groups are eligible for VFC vaccine:

Medicaid (BadgerCare Plus) enrolled or eligible

No health insurance

Underinsured\*

American Indian or Alaska Native

\*Underinsured means your child's private health insurance does not cover all vaccines. They can receive non-covered vaccines through VFC for no cost at a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) or a Rural Health Clinic (RHC). Please call ahead to confirm the provider vaccinates underinsured children.

#### To learn more

Scan the QR code below to visit the VFC webpage to find a VFC location and more VFC program information.



#### Other possible costs

- There is no cost for the vaccine.
- There may be a cost for giving each vaccine, **but you will not be denied if you cannot pay it.**
- Some locations may charge a fee for the office visit and other non-vaccine services. Call ahead for more information.

Please call the VFC location ahead of time to see if you need to make an appointment.

Division of Public Health  
Bureau Of Communicable Diseases  
[www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/immunization/vfc-parent.htm](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/immunization/vfc-parent.htm)  
P-02984 (03/2026)



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT  
of HEALTH SERVICES

# Resources

## Updated Immunization Rate Data on DHS website

The 2025 annual vaccination rates for children, adolescents and adults have all been published publicly on the [Wisconsin DHS Immunization Data webpage](#).

Wisconsin's childhood vaccination rates decreased by almost 2% from 2024. While nearly 7 of every 10 children (66.9%) had the recommended vaccinations at age 24 months, nearly 3 of every 10 did not.

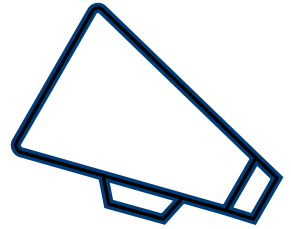
The data show minor decreases in some adolescent vaccinations, such as HPV and Tdap, and increases in meningococcal vaccination rates among adolescents. Vaccination rates among adults remained steady.

Read the full news release: [DHS Releases 2025 Statewide Vaccination Rate Data, Childhood Rates Continue Decline \(March 9, 2026\)](#)

# Resources

## WIR Modernization Spotlight

### Preparing for the New WIR and WBLR System



DHS staff are currently working with the vendor to configure the modernized Wisconsin Immunization Registry (WIR) and Wisconsin Blood Lead Registry (WBLR) system. It is anticipated that all providers will transition to the new system during spring of 2027.

As part of early preparation efforts, providers should focus on ensuring your user and contact information is up to date. Keeping this information current will be critical for maintaining communications, system access, and ongoing support, as we move to the new system.

Step-by-step instructions for updating user accounts are available in the "Manage Access" guide (see editing user information beginning on page 13). This guide and other training resources can be found in WIR and on the WIR Information for Providers and Partners webpage.

For questions, or to request to be included on WIR modernization communications, please contact

[DHSIIS@dhs.wisconsin.gov](mailto:DHSIIS@dhs.wisconsin.gov).

# Resources

## 2026 Promising Practices Series Together Towards a Future Free from HPV-Related Cancers

Registration is now open for a new webinar series hosted by The American Cancer Society (ACS) and the ACS National HPV Vaccination Roundtable (HPVRT). The series focuses on sharing effective strategies and real-world solutions for strengthening HPV vaccination and cervical cancer elimination initiatives within health care systems, public health initiatives, and community organizations. Visit the [2026 Promising Practices Series registration site](#) to register.

### Sessions

Partnering for HPV Vaccination Progress June 18, 1–3 p.m.

Provider Education for On-Time HPV Vaccination August 20, 1–3 p.m.

Provider & Team Champions for HPV Vaccination October 15, 1–3 p.m.

Cervical Cancer Elimination December 10, 1–3 p.m.

### Open Forums

VFC open forum sessions are held once a month as a space to ask questions that you might have about VFC, vaccine ordering, WIR, WIR reports and more.

Please save the following dates for future VFC open forums:

- July 3, 2026, 11:30 a.m.–12:15 p.m.
- August 5, 2026, 11:30 a.m.–12:15 p.m.

In case you missed them, [previous open forums](#) are recorded.

# Contact Us

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