



News Release

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Childhood immunization rates decline during the pandemic

Now is the time to schedule a well-child visit to get your child up to date on vaccinations

OLYMPIA – A new [report](#) shows routine childhood immunization rates decreased during the pandemic, dropping by 13% in 2021 when compared to pre-pandemic levels.

The drop was most noticeable in young children. In response, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH), health care providers and other agencies are working with families to catch up and stay current on routine immunizations. “The pandemic has been difficult for everyone. Disruptions to schooling, childcare and in-person health care made it hard for some families to stay up to date on their shots,” said Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett, MD, MPH, Chief Science Officer. “We encourage parents and caregivers to schedule their well-child visits as soon as possible, to make sure their kids are happy, healthy, meeting developmental milestones, and ready for school.”

The new report, compiled by DOH, compares routine childhood vaccination rates in Washington from 2021 to averages from 2015-2019. Rates were found to have declined the most in younger children, however rates in teens increased. Key findings include:

- Vaccinations decreased 9.6% in the 19–35-month age group.
- Vaccinations decreased 3.9% in the 4–6-year age group.
- Vaccinations decreased 3.6% in the 11–12-year age group.
- Vaccinations increased 1.8% in the 13–17-year age group.

Children need to be up to date on immunizations to attend pre-school, kindergarten, school, or childcare this fall. Scheduling well-child visits early ensure children can attend educational programs on time and can reduce the stress of finding a last-minute appointment. DOH has

News Release Title

March ##, 2022

Page 2

online tools to help you determine if your child is up to date on state immunization requirements. Vaccine requirement charts for parents and caregivers are available in a variety of languages [here](#). Washington state provides all recommended childhood vaccines at no cost to children through the age of 18.

The Department of Health has implemented a variety of efforts to boost childhood immunization rates to pre-pandemic levels. Some of these efforts include direct messaging through the [Watch Me Grow Washington](#) program for parents with young children, improving equitable vaccine access and support for tribes, and collaboration with local public health. “Vaccines are the best tools we have to protect kids from getting sick from preventable diseases,” added Dr. Kwan-Gett.

The [DOH website](#) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. [Find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#). Sign up for the DOH blog, [Public Health Connection](#).

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