



American College of
Emergency Physicians®

ADVANCING EMERGENCY CARE 

POLICY STATEMENT

Approved October 2020

Immunization of Adults and Children in the Emergency Department

Revised October 2020,
June 2015

Originally approved January
2008, replacing
“Immunizations in the
Emergency Department”
(2002), “Immunization of
Pediatric Patients” (2000),
and “Immunization of Adult
Patients” (2000)

The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) recognizes that vaccine-preventable infectious diseases have a significant effect on the health of adults and children. The emergency department (ED) is used frequently for health care by many inadequately vaccinated adults and children who are at risk for such diseases. EDs serve as a primary interface between hospitals and the community at large and have been on the frontlines of infectious or biological threats. To promote the health and well-being of individual patients and the population, ACEP thus supports the following principles:

- Immunization against vaccine-preventable diseases, including the seasonal influenza vaccine, should be ensured for all physicians, nurses, and advanced practitioners in the absence of appropriate medical contraindications or exemptions.
- ED physicians, nurses, and advanced practitioners should have current knowledge of, or access to, recommended vaccination administration schedules. Utilization of resources embedded within the electronic medical record or through web or app-based resources is encouraged.¹
- Electronic vaccination records should be accessible to all emergency physicians.
- EDs should establish relationships with public health entities, urgent care and retail clinics, managed health care organizations, private physicians, and/or local pharmacies to ensure rapid referral of under-vaccinated patients. Information should be tailored to the community served and integrated into discharge instructions.
- When local resources are not readily available for vaccinating under-vaccinated patients or concern by physicians, nurses, or advanced practitioners exists regarding the ability of a patient to utilize available resources, providing vaccinations to these patients in the ED may save lives and prevent further disease.
- Emergency vaccination for tetanus, and postexposure treatment for rabies should be available in the ED for patients of all ages.

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- Patients who receive immunization(s) in the ED should be provided with appropriate education regarding the vaccine(s) [eg, CDC Vaccine Information Statement ²] and encouraged to report adverse events through the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). ^{3,4}
- In cases of outbreaks, epidemics or pandemics of vaccine-preventable diseases (including emerging infections and biological threats), emergency physicians should assist health care facilities in partnering with public health agencies to develop and implement mass vaccination programs.

References:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Injury Prevention Vaccine Schedules App for Health Care Providers. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/schedule-app.html>. Accessed: September 2020.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Injury Prevention Vaccine Information Statements (VISs). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/index.html>. Accessed: September 2020.
3. Reporting of Vaccine-Related Adverse Events. American College of Emergency Physicians. Available at: <https://www.acep.org/patient-care/policy-statements/reporting-of-vaccine-related-adverse-events>.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Injury Prevention. Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System. Available at: <https://vaers.hhs.gov/>. Accessed: September 2020.