

Back to School – Immunizations

The Immunization Program at the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) and Vermont health care providers work closely together to reduce the burden of vaccine-preventable illness in Vermont. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends a vaccination coverage rate of >80% in children aged 24-35 months. National Immunization Survey data, however, and data collected by VDH from private practices, reveal that only 68% of Vermont children in this age group have received all of their recommended immunizations on time, ranking Vermont 46th in the nation for vaccination coverage. The vaccination rate for adolescents in Vermont is unknown; VDH is currently collecting data to determine this measure. Students of all ages are currently preparing to return to school. The Immunization Program would like to remind health care providers to take this opportunity to encourage the following recommended immunizations:

Kindergarten: VT school law currently requires students entering kindergarten to have at least 3 doses of DTap, 3 doses of polio, 2 doses of measles vaccine, and one dose of rubella vaccine. The ACIP and VDH recommend that children aged 4-6 have received 2 doses each of MMR and varicella vaccine, and a complete series of DTaP (5 doses), polio (4 doses), and hepatitis B (3 doses) vaccines.

7th Grade: VT school law currently requires students entering 7th Grade to have completed a series of hepatitis B vaccine and a tetanus booster 10 years after their last dose (new: Tdap preferred).

10-18 year olds: The ACIP and VDH recommend that patients aged 10-18 should receive Tdap and meningococcal vaccines and have completed the 3-dose hepatitis B series, 2 MMR doses, 2 doses of varicella vaccine (or history of disease), and a polio series. Additionally, girls in this age group should receive 3 doses of HPV vaccine.

The adolescent patient can be a challenge for medical providers to immunize since some students do not see their health care provider routinely in the middle and high school years. Studies published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and in *Pediatrics* looked at interventions for improving vaccination coverage rates and concluded that a patient reminder/recall system is an effective way to improve immunization delivery. The VDH Immunization Registry Program is currently piloting a reminder/recall system and plans to make it available to all participants soon.

Vaccination Exemption: VT law allows parents and students to exempt out of vaccinations for medical, religious or philosophic reasons. The American Academy of Pediatrics has developed a "Refusal to Vaccinate" form that can provide the context for a discussion with parents about the importance of immunizations, and the risks associated with the decision not to immunize children. This form is available at: http://www.aap.org/bst/showdetl.cfm?&DID=15&Product_ID=3808

Upcoming Changes: VT school entry requirements are currently under legislative review and are expected to reflect changes prior to school entry by the fall of 2008. For immunization information and forms, please go to:

<http://healthvermont.gov/hc/imm/provider.aspx#schedule>

For immunization questions, please call 863-7638, or 1(800)646-4343 (VT)

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The Infectious Disease Bulletin can be viewed at:

<http://healthvermont.gov/pubs/IDB/index.aspx>

For questions & comments, please contact Mary Spayne at (802)863-7240

Contents:

Back to School -
Immunizations

Chart: Selected
Reportable
Diseases
July - 2007

