



Study: Children’s hospitals missing opportunities to vaccinate

January 10, 2022

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Article type: [Health Briefs](#)

Topics: [Hospital Medicine](#) , [Infectious Diseases](#) , [Public Health](#) , [Vaccine/Immunization](#)

Children’s hospitals vaccinated patients at just 13% of visits, leaving many missed opportunities to help them catch up on immunizations, according to a new study.

Those catch-up opportunities are especially crucial because many children have missed vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“With 3 million pediatric hospitalizations annually, developing robust systems to identify and provide vaccines during hospitalization has the potential to improve childhood vaccination rates,” authors wrote in their study, “Vaccine Administration in Children’s Hospitals,” (Bryan MA, et al. *Pediatrics*. Jan. 10, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2021-053925>).

Researchers analyzed data on 1.5 million hospitalizations at 49 U.S. children’s hospitals from 2017-’19. They did not have information on individual eligibility and instead used patients’ ages and adjusted for state-level vaccination rates. Previous studies have found anywhere from 27% to 84% of hospitalized children are due for a vaccine.

While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends](#) using hospital visits to catch up on vaccination, the new study found only about 13% of hospitalizations included administration of at least one vaccine dose. That rate varied by hospital, ranging from 1% to 45%.

Most of the vaccines administered at the children's hospitals in the study were hepatitis B (HepB) and influenza. Authors noted parents may have had an easier time remembering if their child needed a flu shot, and they also may have trusted this vaccine more than others. The Joint Commission, which accredits and certifies health care organizations, also considers flu vaccination a clinical quality measure for hospitals.

Only 2% of hospitalizations included administration of a vaccine other than HepB birth dose or influenza, according to the study. Those vaccines most commonly included pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, *Haemophilus influenzae* type B vaccine and diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine. Some hospitals did not administer any rotavirus, varicella, hepatitis A, HPV or measles, mumps and rubella vaccines.

The odds of receiving a routine vaccine were highest among hospitalized children who were under 2 months, Black, had public insurance, were medically complex or stayed at the hospital at least three days, the study found.

Authors of the study called for identifying strategies to improve hospital vaccination rates and better integration of immunization data with electronic medical records and administrative databases to help identify children due for a vaccine.

Resources

- [CDC immunization schedules](#)
- [AAP clinical report *Countering Vaccine Hesitancy*](#)
- [Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org on immunizations](#)
- [AAP immunization resources](#)