

Enhancing Vaccination Workflow

A year-round reference tool for pharmacists



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Creating opportunities for people to be vaccinated, like most everything else in health care, can be approached in different ways. The suggestions in this presentation are drawn from information provided to Merck by others and are being supplied for informational purposes only. You may find information that is useful to you and some information that is not applicable to your circumstances. This resource is not intended to be directive or encompass all available options, and Merck makes no representation or guarantee as to the accuracy or appropriateness of this information for your particular use. Additionally, in-store pharmacy vaccination laws and regulations, including which vaccine pharmacists are permitted to administer, vary by state. Consult the appropriate resources, including the relevant state pharmacy boards, for more information.

You are uniquely positioned to provide year-round patient access to vaccines¹

- Patients are often in pharmacies.²
- In 2016, patients shopped in the pharmacy approximately 3.7 times per month on average.²
 - Study Design: 20-minute online survey conducted with a geographically representative sample of U.S. pharmacy customers (18+ years old).
 - In order to qualify for the survey, respondents had to have filled 6+ prescriptions (new and/or refill) in the past 12 months and shopped at a pharmacy in the past 30 days.
- Nationwide, pharmacies have become an increasingly critical part of a patient's health care network.³
- Vaccination can be a fulfilling and effective way for pharmacists to participate in patient care.⁴

Improved vaccination services can empower you and your pharmacy and reinforce your ever-expanding role as a valued health care provider¹

- Improved community access and increased vaccination rates mean that more patients may be protected against potentially serious diseases.

The CDC and HHS urge community pharmacists to make vaccination a priority in their pharmacies¹

- According to a 2012 joint letter from the 2 organizations:
“Pharmacists and community vaccinators are uniquely positioned to promote and provide vaccines to people in a wide range of communities. In addition, their extensive reach into diverse communities allows greater access to vaccines for those who may not have a medical home, and who traditionally have had lower rates of vaccine use.”

CDC=Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
HHS=US Department of Health and Human Services.

Pharmacy teams should work together and be proactive when it comes to vaccination⁵

This section will focus on specific ways to support your pharmacy team:

1. Delegate roles and responsibilities⁵
2. Set goals and milestones⁶
3. Establish protocols to educate staff⁵
4. Anticipate vaccination opportunities year round⁶



1. Delegate roles and responsibilities to help your pharmacy function as a cohesive team and improve vaccination process efficiencies⁵

- As appropriate, assign pharmacy employees with specific, manageable tasks or parts of the vaccination process. Rely on them to help champion these responsibilities:
 - Providing patient vaccination cost and coverage details, including co-payments or out-of-pocket costs⁷
 - Consistently communicating with physicians or other health care partners⁷
 - Having educational materials ready as a resource for patients and staff⁷
 - Maintaining vaccine inventory and proper storage conditions⁵
- Encourage staff members to take ownership of vaccination by embracing these different roles. Help them understand how critical their role is in building and maintaining an effective year-round routine.⁸

“Pharmacy technicians and ancillary staff members have a meaningful role to play in the provision of clinical services, specifically regarding immunizations.”⁸

Journal of the American Pharmacists Association

2. Set concrete goals and milestones to help motivate and focus staff on vaccination⁶

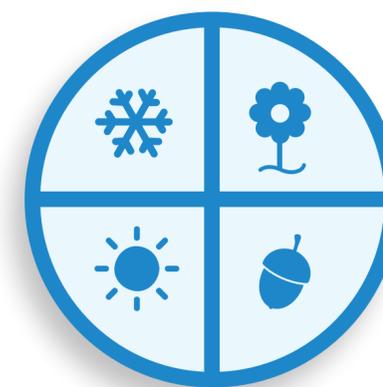
- At the store level, your pharmacy can establish realistic and appropriate qualitative or quantitative goals.
 - Pursuing goals or milestones can help staff improve awareness of their progress as vaccinators, and reaching these goals can reinforce the accomplishments of the team.

3. Establish store protocols for educating staff⁵

- Have materials available for staff education.⁷
- Refer your staff to additional sources of information from organizations, such as:
 - The American Pharmacists Association (APhA)
 - The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)
 - Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS)
 - The National Community Pharmacists Association

4. Anticipate opportunities for vaccination year round⁵

- Build vaccination services and procedures to reflect the pharmacy’s busiest hours.
 - Ensure that staffing reflects this need.
- Reduce patients’ physical barriers to vaccination:
 - Clinic hours
 - Wait time
 - Distance
 - Cost
- Recognize opportunities to discuss all appropriate vaccines in a single visit.⁵



Make Vaccination a Team Effort

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Walk-in patients represent a great opportunity to improve vaccination rates⁹

According to the APhA, there are specific advantages to focusing on walk-ins:

- More convenient for patients
- Increases chances of vaccinating patients who come to your pharmacy for other reasons
- Allows for adequate patient-provider contact time

APhA=American Pharmacists Association.

Proactive interaction with patients is a cornerstone of a successful vaccination program⁷

This section will explore each step of the process that leads to vaccination:

1. Identify eligible patients
2. Initiate a conversation
3. Educate patients about diseases and vaccines
4. Recommend clearly where eligible, and vaccinate where appropriate





1. IDENTIFY eligible patients for vaccination⁷

- Patient eligibility can be determined based on a number of factors, including:
 - Age
 - Patient medical history/comorbid conditions
 - Occupation
 - Travel
- Staff should identify the type of insurance coverage plan for each patient (whether it's private medical insurance, Medicare Part B, or Medicare Part D).
- Consider having your patients complete a vaccination assessment or patient screening questionnaire to learn their vaccine history.
 - Screening patients fully can help you identify all vaccines for which they may be eligible.⁵

“If the patient was not present in the store, the prescription bag was flagged with a sticker to indicate that follow-up was needed. When the patient arrived back in the store to pick up the prescription, the cashier notified the patient of vaccine eligibility and directed any clinical questions to the pharmacist.”⁸

Journal of the American Pharmacists Association

Relevant Resources:
(available for download
in Resource Section)

 Patient screening questionnaire

 Flag the bag sticker template

- Overview
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2. INITIATE a conversation and be proactive when engaging patients about vaccination

- Opportunities to initiate a conversation with patients can be integrated into your workflow by pairing them with other established pharmacy routines.^{5,7}
 - Determine the most convenient times during the prescription process, such as pickup, drop-off, or counseling for a chronic condition.
 - Look for opportunities when you see eligible patients in greater numbers, such as during senior discount days, employee screenings, health fairs, or during the fall vaccination season.
 - Have educational materials available to help support your discussions.⁷

“Vaccine advocacy is an essential step to positively affecting [vaccination] rates”⁸

Journal of the American Pharmacists Association



3. EDUCATE patients about diseases and vaccines so they can make an informed decision⁷

- Have educational materials ready to help aid a conversation about vaccination.
 - Refer to Vaccine Information Statements (VISs).
- Patients may be more likely to consider vaccination when they understand the potential seriousness of certain diseases and the potential benefits and risks of vaccines.
- Adult patients may not be aware of their eligibility for specific vaccines.¹⁰

Share with your patients⁷:

- Why they may be a good candidate to receive a particular vaccine.
- Their risk factors for certain diseases, such as age or chronic condition and the potential benefits and risks of vaccination.
- That vaccination can help protect them from potentially debilitating diseases.

- The CDC’s adult vaccination schedule and recommendations for who should be vaccinated.

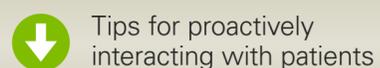
Visit the following web pages for more information:
[CDC’s ACIP Adult Immunization Schedule](#)
[Vaccine Information Statements \(VISs\)](#)



4. RECOMMEND vaccination clearly to your patients, as appropriate, and VACCINATE once they have accepted your recommendation⁷

- Patients are more likely to get vaccinated if their pharmacist clearly recommends it.¹
- Patients want more than just information—they want your advice on vaccination.⁷
 - Explain why you believe they should receive a certain vaccine.
 - Choose simple and unambiguous language when making your recommendation.
 - Share a personal experience or story to illustrate the importance of vaccination.
- How you discuss a patient’s coverage and co-pay status can influence their decision to get vaccinated.⁷
 - Help patients identify their insurance coverage for vaccination; vaccine coverage may be restricted to medical benefit only.
- In instances in which patients do not get vaccinated that day, consider developing a reminder system.⁵
 - You may want to develop a system for following up with a patient who remains unvaccinated.
 - If they still want more information, consider reaching out to their physician.⁵

Relevant Resources:
(available for download
in Resource Section)



Understanding reimbursement and coverage eligibility is crucial to both patients and your pharmacy⁷

This section will address your approach to different types of coverage:

1. Insurance coverage is important to patients⁷
2. Understand Medicare Part B¹¹
3. Understand Medicare Part D¹²
4. Understand different private insurance
5. Keep informed of claims processing procedures



Remember: The reimbursement information provided in this section is subject to change. It is not intended to be exhaustive, or to replace the guidance of a qualified reimbursement advisor, and does not constitute legal or reimbursement advice. The use of the information presented here is not a guarantee of coverage or payment. As a provider, you are solely responsible for billing payers correctly and for determining if any payer-specific guidelines apply. Merck does not guarantee or assure the timeliness or appropriateness of this information for your particular use given the frequent changes in public and private payer billing.

1. Insurance coverage is important to patients⁷

- Pharmacy staff must have a strong understanding of coverage options and how it applies to each patient.
 - Pharmacists can often access and explain a patient's individual coverage during any conversation about vaccination.
- All health plans under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) must provide in-network coverage for many of the available adult vaccines. Check with the patient's individual plan to confirm coverage for a specific vaccine.
- Staff should be aware of how Medicare Parts B and D and private insurance affect coverage, and how vaccines are adjudicated under each type of plan.¹¹
 - Typically, you will explore Medicare options for insured adults ≥ 65 years of age, and look for private medical insurance options for those less than 65 years of age who are not yet eligible for Medicare.
 - Know which vaccines can be covered under Medicare Part B as a medical expense or Medicare Part D as a prescription expense.¹²
 - Whether reimbursement is available for a specific patient depends on the patient's benefit design, including applicable co-pays, coinsurance, and/or other deductions. Thus, it is important to check with the specific plan when determining coverage.¹¹

2. Understand Medicare Part B

- Under Original Medicare (Fee-For-Service), Part B covers most of the vaccines Medicare patients need.
 - Vaccines covered under Part B: submit a claim to the Medicare Administrative Contractor for both the vaccine and its administration.¹²
 - Vaccines for patients enrolled in Medicare Advantage (MA) plans: submit claims to the patient's MA plan.
- Pharmacies typically have the capacity to adjudicate claims as a medical benefit for vaccination of Part B enrollees.¹¹
 - In order to file Part B claims, the pharmacist or pharmacy must have a National Provider Identification (NPI) number.¹¹

3. Understand Medicare Part D¹²

- For vaccines not covered under Medicare Part B, Part D plans cover all commercially available vaccines considered reasonable and necessary to prevent illness.
 - You might not be able to bill the Part D plan directly, in which case you may need to work with the patient and the patient's Part D plan to obtain payment.

4. Understand different private insurance⁷

- Most private health plans cover pharmacy vaccinations.¹³
- Vaccines may be covered under a patient's medical benefit, pharmacy benefit, or both.
- If you cannot adjudicate a patient's commercial insurance claim in the pharmacy, you may consider referring them to their physician's office.
- Patients who join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan are subject to losing their private insurance.

5. Keep informed of claims processing procedures

- Pharmacy benefit managers are a valuable resource for maintaining accuracy and efficiency.¹⁴

Consistent communication between pharmacists and physicians is critical to patients' well-being⁷

This section will help you reinforce your pharmacy's important role in community health care:

1. Establish and maintain communication with physicians⁷
2. Join the Merck Adult Vaccine Program locator



1. Establish and maintain communication with local physicians⁷

- Inform them of any updates to your pharmacy's vaccination services.
- Send vaccination documentation to physicians in a timely and consistent fashion to inform them that their patient has been vaccinated.
 - Set up a staff champion to handle patient documentation, including any notifications, Vaccine Information Statements (VISs), patient forms, or other paperwork.
 - Reach out to a physician when his or her patient wants more information—or if a prescription is needed.

2. Join and use the [Merck Adult Vaccination Locator](#) to help other health care professionals and patients find you and your pharmacy

“...a conscious effort is needed from all health care practitioners, including pharmacists, to reduce the burden of vaccine-preventable illness.”⁸

Journal of the American Pharmacists Association

Relevant Resources:
(available for download
in Resource Section)

 Physician notification
template

Pharmacy staff may need a refresher on the fundamentals of administering vaccines

This section will remind you of some vaccination basics:

1. Optimize your workspace¹⁵
2. Refine the stocking and inventory process¹⁵
3. Keep refrigeration and storage standards high¹⁵
4. Careful handling of vaccines is as important as proper storage¹⁶
5. Report adverse reactions¹⁷





1. Optimize your workspace

- Display educational materials prominently, as allowed, for patients to view and find easily.⁷
 - Patients can read these materials as they wait for other pharmacy services, which can help educate patients and provide them with an opportunity to ask questions.
- Develop a system that is well organized, and enable a workflow that allows sufficient time for patient care.¹⁵
- Ensure all vaccine materials and supplies are well organized and easily accessible, and that there is a designated area to administer vaccines.¹⁵
- Prepare the pharmacy team to optimize the workspace during pharmacy activities like dispensing, processing, and preparing supplies, and have ready Vaccine Information Statements (VISs), vaccination cards, or other forms.¹⁵

2. Refine the stocking and inventory process¹⁶

- Check the temperature of the refrigerator or freezer at the same time every day—the beginning of the day may be optimal—and keep a temperature log that keeps track of this.
- Monitor expiration dates of the vaccines and their diluents regularly.

Relevant Resources:
(available for download
in Resource Section)



Checklist for proper vaccine
handling and storage



Vaccine inventory
control log



3. Keep refrigeration and storage standards high⁶

- Keep vaccines at the proper temperatures—maintaining the integrity of the “cold chain.”⁸
 - The refrigerator should maintain temperatures between 35°F and 46°F (2°C and 8°C), and should generally be set for the middle of that range, at about 40°F (5°C), to provide the best safety margin. The freezer should be between -58°F and +5°F (between -50°C and -15°C).
 - Frequently opening the door of the refrigerator or freezer can interrupt the cold chain.
 - Vaccines should be stored in the center of the refrigerator or freezer, never in crispers, doors, or airtight containers.
 - To help stabilize temperatures, store bottles or jugs of water in the refrigerator and store frozen water bottles in the freezer and freezer door.
- Check temperatures consistently and maintain a log.
- Consider other precautions, to avoid major problems and in case of emergency, such as⁸:
 - Installing a temperature alarm to alert pharmacists if levels fall above or below normal.
 - Securing the refrigerator and freezer plug to the electrical outlet to ensure it does not accidentally come unplugged.
 - Investing in a backup generator to maintain temperatures in case of a power outage.

Relevant Resources:
(available for download
in Resource Section)



Vaccine temperature log,
fridge



Vaccine temperature log,
freezer



Vaccine storage equipment
failure worksheet

4. Know how to prepare different types of vaccines¹⁶

- Lyophilized vaccines come in powder or pellet form and must be reconstituted with a diluent prior to administration.
- Diluents vary in volume and composition based on the requirements of the corresponding vaccine; refer to the manufacturer's package insert for storage and handling guidance.

5. Report adverse reactions if they occur

- Federal law requires the accurate, complete, and timely reporting of certain post-vaccine health issues to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS), a vaccine-monitoring program that gathers data about adverse events.¹⁷
- CDC encourages HCPs to report any clinically significant post-vaccination health issues involving any vaccine.

CDC= Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention.

Relevant Resources:
(available for download
in Resource Section)



VAERS form



Good vaccination practices
– building on the basics

Vaccination resources for your pharmacy



Patient screening questionnaire



Flag the bag sticker template



Tips for proactively interacting with patients



Our pharmacy can help—notification of vaccination services



Vaccine inventory control log



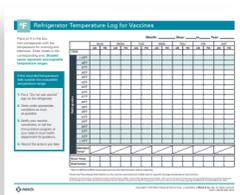
Physician notification template



Checklist for proper vaccine handling and storage



Vaccination process sheet



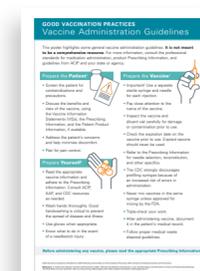
Vaccine temperature log, fridge



Vaccine storage equipment failure worksheet



Vaccine temperature log, freezer



Good vaccination practices—building on the basics

External Resources

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Web site](#)
- [CDC Adult Vaccination Schedule](#)
- [CDC Vaccine Information Statements \(VISs\)](#)
- [Merck Adult Vaccination Locator](#)
- [VAERS: Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System](#)

For more information, consult your Merck vaccine representative.
Additional resources can be found at [MerckVaccines.com](https://www.merckvaccines.com)[®] or call 1-877-829-6372.

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