Pharmacists Immunizing Kids: Frequently Asked Questions

The following information answers pharmacists’ frequently asked questions about providing vaccinations to children and adolescents. This FAQ document, prepared as a PSW member service, can be used by your pharmacy as you prepare to administer vaccines to children.

Which section in Wisconsin State Statutes pertains to the change in vaccination age for pharmacists to include children over the age of six?

Section 3212q. 450.035 (2) of the statutes is amended to read:

450.035 (2) A pharmacist may not administer a vaccine unless he or she has successfully completed 12 hours in a course of study and training, approved by the American Council on Pharmaceutical Education or the board, in vaccination storage, protocols, administration technique, emergency procedures and record keeping and has satisfied the requirements specified in sub. (2t). A pharmacist may not administer a vaccine under this subsection to a person who is under the age of 6.

What does my pharmacy have to change in their immunization protocol to provide immunizations to children 6 and above?

Your pharmacy must update your immunization protocol to reflect the change in administration age to six years and older and to include any new vaccinations that you plan to administer to this age group. Once this change has been made, the protocol must be re-signed by a physician. Additional written policy documents, such as immunization emergency procedures, must also be modified to reflect the change in age.

Do I need additional training or CPR certification in order to administer vaccines to children?

The amendment that provided for the change does not require the pharmacist to complete additional training or courses in immunization delivery. PSW is, however, offering immunization updates and additional information for pharmacists that plan to provide immunizations to children ages 6 – 18.

CPR certification is not required by Wisconsin law. A pharmacy’s protocol, however, often contains a requirement that the pharmacists immunizing under that protocol are certified to perform CPR in order to respond in an emergency situation. If this is the case for your pharmacy, you must maintain CPR certification according to your protocol. CPR certification is strongly recommended by PSW. We encourage pharmacists to maintain their CPR certification (usually renewed every 1-2 years) for children and adults.
What is the proper administration technique for children and adolescents?

Appropriate vaccine administration technique is critical to ensure complete vaccine efficacy and safety. When providing intramuscular (IM) injections for children and adolescents 6 years and older a 22-25 gauge needle that is 1-1 ¼ inches in length should be used. The deltoid muscle is the preferred site for IM injection in patients over 6 years of age. The anterolateral thigh muscle can be used as an alternative.

When providing subcutaneous injections for children and adolescents 6 years and older, a 23-25 gauge needle that is 5/8 inches in length should be used and the immunization should be administered in the fatty tissue over the triceps or anterolateral thigh muscle.


My pharmacy is hesitant to provide vaccinations to children due to concern for loss of follow-up for childhood vaccinations that require multiple doses. What methods can my pharmacy use to help ensure appropriate follow-up?

PSW believes that pharmacists can play a role in ensuring the completion of a vaccine series. Pharmacists should provide parents with a written vaccination record, which can include recommendations and timing for additional vaccine doses. This empowers parents to take an active role in their child’s health care and creates a written record.

In addition, pharmacies should participate in the Wisconsin Immunization Registry (WIR). The WIR is a computerized, confidential electronic record that can be used to record immunizations, contraindications and adverse reactions and can also be used to check the immunization status of a patient. The system can produce recall and reminder notices for vaccines that require multiple doses and can verify if doses have been given by other health care providers. Trainings for WIR are conducted frequently throughout the state for no cost. More information on WIR and trainings is available at [http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/immunization/WIR.htm](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/immunization/WIR.htm).

Follow-up letters and phone calls can be used by pharmacists to take an active approach to ensuring vaccine series doses are administered.

Implementing the above services in pharmacies can help in ensure appropriate patient follow-up and completion of vaccination series. PSW believes that pharmacies who can demonstrate success in providing follow-up doses for vaccination will encourage additional payers to support pediatric immunization of children and provide pharmacists with reimbursement for the service.
Under what circumstances should a child receive a second annual dose of the influenza vaccine?

For a child less than nine years old receiving the influenza vaccine for the first time:

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends **TWO doses** of influenza vaccine, spaced at **least 4 weeks apart** in the initial year. For inactivated (injectable) vaccine, the dose for children 6 and older is 0.5 mL. For the intranasal vaccine, the dose for children is a 0.2 mL sprayer.

For a child less than 9 years of age receiving the influenza vaccination for the 2\textsuperscript{nd} time, but only received ONE dose during their first vaccination season:

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends two doses of influenza vaccine in the second season of vaccination, spaced at least 4 weeks apart.

For a child less than 9 years of receiving the influenza vaccination 3 or more times, but only received ONE dose during the previous vaccination seasons:

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends that a single dose of influenza vaccine be administered.

How can I be reimbursed for vaccines administered to children in my pharmacy?

**Medicaid** – PSW is working closely with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to determine a reimbursement process for childhood vaccines administered to Medicaid members. More information will be available soon. Please watch Fast Facts for updates.

**Unity** – Unity has expanded their Community Pharmacy Flu Vaccination program to include all Unity members 8 years old and older. Participating pharmacies must have a separate vaccine administration contract with Unity to participate. Claims are processed directly with Unity's pharmacy claims processor (including those Unity members with a medical benefit but not a Unity drug benefit) and the patient has no out-of-pocket cost ($0 copay). Please contact Unity's Pharmacy Program at (888) 450-4884 if you are interested in participating. This program has been very successful and popular with members in the first two years and Unity would like to thank participating community pharmacies for their contributions.

**Other insurers** – PSW is working to gather information about other insurance companies offering reimbursement for vaccines administered to children. Please provide information on other payors to PSW and stay tuned to Fast Facts for updates.

**Cash** – As with vaccines provided to adults, pharmacies may provide vaccines to children for a “cash price” for those patients whose insurance does not reimburse the pharmacy. Please note that, as with any service or product, the cash price may not be less than the “usual and customary” price that you bill insurers.
What is the Vaccine for Children (VFC) program and can a pharmacist in Wisconsin become a VFC registered provider?

The VFC program is federally funded and provides vaccines to providers at no cost. This vaccine is then used to immunize children who are unable to pay for the vaccine themselves. Children 18 and younger are eligible for this service if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. Enrolled in Medicaid
2. Uninsured
3. American India or Alaska Native (defined by the Indian Health Services Act)

Pharmacists are now eligible to register as VFC providers in Wisconsin because state law allows pharmacists to immunize children. To enroll your pharmacy, call the local VFC coordinator at (608) 266-1506.

As a VFC provider am I required to provide all requested vaccines to patients?

If enrolled in the VFC program, the pharmacy/pharmacist may limit VFC practice to particular relevant vaccines and are not obligated to offer all age-appropriate vaccines to VFC eligible patients.

Will my pharmacy be reimbursed for vaccine administration through the VFC program?

VFC will only provide the enrolled pharmacy with the vaccine product at no cost. Vaccine administration fees are not covered through the VFC program. Your pharmacy may not charge patients or their insurance company (i.e. Medicaid) for the cost of the vaccine when provided through the VFC program. Your pharmacy may, however, bill the patient or the Medicaid program for the administration fee.