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Immunization of Adults and Children in the Emergency Department

Revised 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 are likely to be called on to play a prominent role in the event of an emerging infectious or biological threat. To promote the health and well-being of individual patients and the population, ACEP thus supports the following principles.

- Annual immunization of ED health care providers against influenza should be strongly encouraged in the absence of an appropriate contraindication or exemption.
- EDs should establish relationships with public health entities, urgent care and retail clinics, managed health care organizations, private physicians, and local pharmacies to ensure the rapid referral of undervaccinated patients.
- If there is no readily available resource for vaccinating undervaccinated patients in other health care settings, consideration should be given to providing vaccinations to such patients in the ED.
- In cases of outbreaks or epidemics 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.
- Whenever possible, patients who receive immunization(s) in the ED should be provided with appropriate education regarding the vaccine(s) (e.g., CDC Vaccine Information Statement).
- Electronic vaccination records should be accessible to emergency physicians.

