

For media contact:

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## Childhood Vaccine Campaign

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### Holding Statement: Embargo until 9am PT on March 1, 2023

During the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, families and children experienced many challenges. These challenges made it difficult to schedule in-person well-child visits or get routine vaccinations. As Washington state continues to recover from the pandemic and people return to in-person activities, the Department of Health is encouraging families to catch-up. Now is a great time to schedule visits and vaccinations with your child's doctor or nurse.

To promote this important activity, the Department of Health is launching a media campaign across the state to encourage families to catch up on well-child visits and vaccinations. We're hoping this reminder will give families time to prepare for school and child care vaccination requirements and other activities by the fall.

### Key Messages:

- Many children are due for well-child visits because of challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The media campaign will encourage catching up on childhood wellness visits and vaccinations. Messaging in English and Spanish will be shared across radio and social media.
- The Department of Health plans to send reminder letters to families for children who need to catch up on vaccinations in May 2023.
- If children need to catch up on wellness visits or vaccinations, now is a great time to schedule an appointment.
- The summer is a popular time for families to schedule well-child visits before school starts in the fall. We want children to meet vaccination requirements so they can enter school or child care on time and reduce stress for families.

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## **Other Talking Points:**

### **Improving Vaccination**

- The Department of Health will continue to work to reduce barriers to vaccination for all people.
- Health care providers play an important role in vaccinating families. We encourage providers to follow best practices around reminder/recall, foster discussion with parents, and continue to provide vaccination access to disadvantaged groups.
- Washington state is still experiencing effects from the COVID-19 pandemic. With the increased strain on the medical system from COVID-19, influenza, and RSV, it is especially important to keep families up to date on vaccination.

### **How can parents and guardians protect their children?**

- Children need several important vaccinations that protect them against diseases.
- Immunization is among the most effective ways to protect children against serious and preventable diseases.
- The COVID-19 pandemic, along with other seasonal viruses, have caused strain on the health care system. Parents are encouraged to schedule well-child visits ahead of time to keep their children up-to-date on vaccination.
- Talk with your health care provider to find out which vaccines your child needs. Use yearly checkups and other visits, such as sports physicals, to make sure your children have all the immunizations they need.
- Request a copy of your child’s immunization record from your health care provider so you can keep track of their immunization history. Or sign up for <https://MyIRmobile.com>, which gives you online access to your own and your family’s immunization records. Learn more at [doh.wa.gov/immsrecords](https://doh.wa.gov/immsrecords).
- We recommend families look for Childhood Vaccine Program providers who give childhood vaccinations at no or low cost in Washington state. Pharmacies can offer families an alternative location to get vaccinations, but costs may be a concern if you don’t have insurance. Ask your pharmacy about what vaccinations they offer, what ages of children they vaccinate, and what they charge.

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## How much do vaccines cost?

- Children under 19 years of age in Washington are provided with all recommended vaccines at no or low cost at one of Washington state’s Childhood Vaccine Program providers.
- Health care providers may charge an office visit fee and a fee to give the vaccine, called an administration fee. If you can’t afford the administration fee, you may ask for it to be waived.

## What happens if I choose not to vaccinate my child?

- Unvaccinated children are at risk of getting and spreading diseases if they are exposed.
- Children who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons or have compromised immune systems are at risk with unvaccinated children around them.
- People who aren’t immunized put themselves and others at risk. It only takes a small number of unprotected people to cause a disease outbreak. Some diseases spread easily and quickly and can cause death or serious health consequences.
- Children who are not fully immunized may be excluded from attending school or child care if a disease outbreak occurs.
- Exemptions are allowed for medical, religious, or personal reasons in most cases. However, the best disease protection for your child is to make sure they have all of their recommended immunizations.
- If you have questions about vaccines, talk to your health care provider or visit [www.doh.wa.gov/immunization](http://www.doh.wa.gov/immunization). The Department of Health wants to ensure parents have access to accurate information that answers their questions.

## Where can parents and providers find more information?

- To find a health care provider or an immunization clinic, call your local health department or the [WithinReach](http://WithinReach) Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588, or visit [www.parenthelp123.org](http://www.parenthelp123.org).

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