

Vaccines & Immunizations

Programs & Tools:

VFC: For Parents



Vaccines for Children Program Topics:

| [for State Immunization Projects](#) (../projects/default.htm) | [for Providers](#) (../providers/default.htm)
 | [for Parents](#) (../parents/default.htm) | [VFC Acronyms](#) (../acronyms.htm)
 | [VFC Contacts](#) (../contacts.htm) | [FluMist](#) (../forms/default.htm) | [Surveys](#) (../projects/surveys/default.htm)
 | [Vaccine Supply Policy](#) (../projects/vacc-supply-policy/default.htm)

On this page:

| [Eligibility](#) (#eligible) | [Where](#) (#where) | [Payment](#) (#payment) | [Vaccines](#) (#vac) | [Resources](#) (#resources)
 | [History](#) (#history)

VFC Program: **Vaccines for Uninsured Children** [\(http://www.cdc.gov/features/vfcprogram/\)](http://www.cdc.gov/features/vfcprogram/)

The Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program offers vaccines at no cost for eligible children through VFC-enrolled doctors. Find out if your child qualifies. Vaccinating on time means healthier children, families and communities.

Which Children are Eligible?

Children through 18 years of age who meet at least one of the following criteria are eligible to receive VFC vaccine:

- **Medicaid eligible:** A child who is eligible for the Medicaid program. (For the purposes of the VFC program, the terms "Medicaid-eligible" and "Medicaid-enrolled" are equivalent and refer to children who have health insurance covered by a state Medicaid program)
- **Uninsured:** A child who has no health insurance coverage
- **American Indian or Alaska Native:** As defined by the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (25 U.S.C. 1603)
- **Underinsured:** A child who has commercial (private) health insurance but the coverage does not include vaccines, a child whose insurance covers only selected vaccines (VFC-eligible for non-covered vaccines only), or a child whose insurance caps vaccine coverage at a certain amount. Once that coverage amount is reached, the child is categorized as underinsured. Underinsured children are eligible to receive VFC vaccine only through a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) or Rural Health Clinic (RHC).

Children whose health insurance covers the cost of vaccinations are not eligible for VFC vaccines, even when a claim for the cost of the vaccine and its administration would be denied for payment by the insurance carrier because the plan's deductible had not been met.

What is an FQHC?

An FQHC is a health center that is designated by the Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC) of the Health Services and Resources Administration (HRSA) to provide health care to a medically underserved population. FQHCs include community and migrant health centers, special health facilities such as those for the homeless and persons with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) that receive grants under the Public Health Service (PHS) Act, and "look-alikes," which meet the qualifications but do not actually receive grant funds. They also include health centers within public housing and Indian health centers.

What is an RHC?

An RHC is a clinic located in a Health Professional Shortage Area, a Medically Underserved Area, or a Governor-Designated Shortage Area. RHCs are required to be staffed by physician assistants, nurse

practitioners, or certified nurse midwives at least half of the time that the clinic is open.

[↑TOP \(#top\)](#)

Where Can I Get Vaccines?

VFC vaccines can be administered by any enrolled VFC Program provider (private doctor, private clinic, hospitals, Public Health Clinic, Community Health Clinic, Schools, etc.).

Most pediatricians (doctors specializing in the treatment of children) in the United States and its Territories are now VFC enrolled providers. Additionally, many family practice providers are enrolled, as well as general practitioners, and many other sub-specialty healthcare providers. In some States, schools are enrolled. Altogether, there are over 44,000 providers enrolled in the VFC Program nationwide.

Your State or Territory Health Department is responsible for managing the VFC Program where you reside. Each State or Territory has a VFC Program Coordinator that is responsible for enrolling providers and monitoring the provider's participation in the program. **For help with locating a VFC enrolled provider near your home**, please consult the complete list of [State/Territory VFC Coordinators \(../contacts-state.htm\)](#) and contact your State/Territory VFC Coordinator.

[↑TOP \(#top\)](#)

Do I have to pay anything?

If your child meets one of the VFC eligibility criteria listed above, the vaccine must always be provided free of charge.

Free of charge means just that. The vaccines have already been paid for with federal tax dollars. This means that no one can charge a fee for the vaccine itself.

However, each state immunization provider has been granted (by law) the ability to charge what is called an "administrative fee." An **administrative fee** is similar to a patient's co-pay, in that it helps providers offset their costs of doing business.

The amount of the administrative fee differs from state to state, based on a regional scale determined by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Consult this [chart for the maximum regional charges for vaccine administration by state \(../downloads/vfc-op-guide/20-appx-4-max-reg-charges.pdf\)](#)  [PDF-121KB, 2 pages]

These regional administrative charges are **maximum fees** that providers may ask patients to pay. That means that if a state's administrative fee is \$15.00, a provider may charge a patient any amount up to, but not exceeding that \$15.00 charge, for each vaccine administered. There is no lower limit, so providers have the option to charge what they feel is fair, including no charge at all.

[↑TOP \(#top\)](#)

What vaccines are provided? What diseases are prevented?

There are many single and combination vaccines that are licensed in the US and that protect children against 14 preventable diseases. The vaccines available through the VFC are determined by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices ([ACIP \(../recs/acip/default.htm#about\)](#)). CDC, as the administrator of VFC, purchases and distributes the vaccines. VFC covers any vaccines included in the immunization schedules:

- **Parent version of 2011 recommended immunizations for children from birth through 6 years old** ([../spec-grps/infants/downloads/parent-ver-sch-0-6yrs.pdf](#))  [481KB - 2 pages]
- Parent version of 2011 recommended immunizations for preteens and teens from 7-18 years old **color** (<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/who/teens/downloads/parent-version-schedule-7-18yrs.pdf>)  [613KB - 2 pages] and **black and white** (<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/who/teens/downloads/parent-version-schedule-7-18yrs-bw.pdf>)  [554KB - 2 pages]

Diseases that are preventable by recommended childhood vaccines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) include:

- **Diphtheria** ([../vpd-vac/diphtheria/default.htm#disease](#))

- [Haemophilus influenzae type b \(.../vpd-vac/hib/default.htm#disease\)](#) (Hib)
- [Hepatitis A \(.../vpd-vac/hepa/default.htm#disease\)](#)
- [Hepatitis B \(.../vpd-vac/hepb/default.htm#disease\)](#)
- [Human Papillomavirus \(.../vpd-vac/hpv/default.htm#disease\)](#) (HPV)
- [Influenza \(.../vpd-vac/flu/default.htm#disease\)](#) (flu)
- [Measles \(.../vpd-vac/measles/default.htm#disease\)](#)
- [Meningococcal \(.../vpd-vac/mening/default.htm#disease\)](#)
- [Mumps \(.../vpd-vac/mumps/default.htm#disease\)](#)
- [Pertussis \(.../vpd-vac/pertussis/default.htm#disease\)](#) (whooping cough)
- [Pneumococcal \(.../vpd-vac/pneumo/default.htm#disease\)](#)
- [Polio \(.../vpd-vac/polio/default.htm#disease\)](#)
- [Rotavirus \(.../vpd-vac/rotavirus/default.htm#disease\)](#)
- [Rubella \(.../vpd-vac/rubella/default.htm#disease\)](#) (German Measles)
- [Tetanus \(.../vpd-vac/tetanus/default.htm#disease\)](#) (lockjaw)
- [Varicella \(.../vpd-vac/varicella/default.htm#disease\)](#) (chickenpox)

[↑TOP \(#top\)](#)

What other resources can I check (other useful links)?

[CDC Vaccines and Immunizations web site \(.../default.htm\)](#)

Email: nipinfo@cdc.gov (mailto:nipinfo@cdc.gov)

Provides information about vaccines, including precautions and contraindications for immunization, and vaccine-preventable diseases.

CDC Information Contact Center

1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

TTY: 1-888-232-6348

- [Vaccines for Children \(VFC\) Q&As \(flyer-vfc-parents.htm\)](#)
 - [ [English \(.../downloads/flyer-vfc-parents-508.pdf\)](#) -442KB]
 - [ [Spanish \(.../downloads/flyer-vfc-parents-sp.pdf\)](#) -541KB]
- [Vaccine Information Statements \(.../pubs/vis/default.htm\)](#)
- [VFC Contacts \(.../contacts.htm\)](#)
- [VFC Acronyms \(.../acronyms.htm\)](#)
- [Recommended Child Immunization Schedule \(.../recs/schedules/child-schedule.htm\)](#)
- [Catchup Schedule \(.../recs/schedules/child-schedule.htm#printable\)](#)
- [State Immunization Program Web Sites \(.../projects/iz-websites.htm\)](#)

[↑TOP \(#top\)](#)

What is the history of the Vaccines for Children Program?

In 1989 - 1991, a measles epidemic in the United States resulted in tens of thousands of cases of measles and hundreds of deaths. Upon investigation, CDC found that more than half of the children who had measles had not been immunized, even though many of them had seen a health care provider.

In partial response to that epidemic, Congress passed the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) on August 10, 1993, creating the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program. VFC became operational October 1, 1994. Known as section 1928 of the Social Security Act, the Vaccines for Children program is an entitlement

program (a right granted by law) for eligible children, age 18 and below.

VFC helps families of children who may not otherwise have access to vaccines by providing free vaccines to doctors who serve them.

VFC is administered at the national level by the CDC contracts with vaccine manufacturers to buy vaccines at reduced rates.

States and eligible projects enroll physicians who serve eligible patients up to and including age 18 years and who provide routine immunizations.

 [TOP \(#top\)](#)

[Return to VFC main page \(../default.htm\)](#)

 This symbol means you are leaving the CDC.gov Web site. For more information, please see CDC's [Exit Notification and Disclaimer \(http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html\)](#) policy.

File Formats: All viewers, players, and plug-ins used on this site can be downloaded from the [file formats page \(http://www.cdc.gov/other/plugins/\)](#). (For example: Adobe Acrobat Reader for pdf files, Windows Media Player for audio and video files, PowerPoint Viewer for presentation slides, etc.)

This page last modified on October 19, 2011
Content last reviewed on December 13, 2010
Content Source: National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases