

Up-to-date vaccination: a commitment to social justice

In the past 2 years, we have endured a bewildering array of challenges related to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. We have had to work collectively to minimize transmission, severe illness, and death as the virus mutated to alpha, delta, and omicron variants. However, the one constant has been the ability of up-to-date vaccination to protect the population from overwhelming our healthcare system. Vaccines have proven exceedingly effective at reducing the risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and death. The greater the percentage of the population whose vaccination status is up-to-date, the better we can together ensure that there is adequate medical care available to all, both for Covid-19 infections, and for other routine and acute healthcare needs.

What does “up-to-date” mean? This is an acknowledgement that vaccination recommendations inevitably change as more data become available. “Up-to-date” is an ongoing process that depends on age and immune status. As of this writing, children under the age of 5 years do not yet qualify for vaccination, 5–11-year-olds qualify for 2 doses, adults and youth 12 and older qualify for 3 doses, and those who are immunocompromised qualify for 4 doses. These recommendations will surely change as time goes on. Being “up-to-date” on vaccination means receiving the full number of doses one qualifies for.

Inequities in vaccine delivery and uptake abound. Low resource countries are lagging far behind in protecting their populations with vaccination. In the US, there are persistent gaps in vaccine uptake by race/ethnicity, urban/rural residence, and political ideology. Many of these gaps are beginning to close but there is more work to be done.

As population health is a function of vaccination percentage, it is up to us to protect the greater community and our healthcare system by keeping our vaccination status up-to-date. With a calm and steady commitment to evolving scientific data, we at ECLC can lead in this effort. Additionally, we can support the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and other organizations working to improve vaccine uptake in developing countries.

Commitment to keep our vaccination status up-to-date truly represents a commitment to social justice. As the pandemic continues, it remains among our best tools to show love, care, and concern for our neighbors, near and far.

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Resources:

<https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/latest-data-on-covid-19-vaccinations-by-race-ethnicity/>

<https://www.usaid.gov/coronavirus>

<https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/poll-finding/kff-covid-19-vaccine-monitor-vaccine-attitudes-rural-suburban-urban/>

<https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/poll-finding/importance-of-partisanship-predicting-vaccination-status/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/specific-groups.html>