

OVERVIEW

Health Indicator: Immunization

Immunizations are a silent protector and a great example of prevention at its finest. In fact, we rarely see the diseases for which we are immunizing due to strong systems in place. Immunizations have been like bailing out a boat with a slow leak. When beginning to bail, the boat was filled with water. But with bailing fast and hard (immunizations), the boat is almost dry. However, the leak has not stopped. If we were to halt our efforts, we would soon notice water seeping in, and it could return to original levels. Unless we can “stop the leak” (eliminate the disease), it is important to keep immunizing. Even if there are only a few cases of disease today, removing the protection given by vaccinations would likely cause more people to become infected, thus providing an opportunity for disease to spread. Quickly, we could undo the progress that has been made over the years. Until we find a way to eliminate the disease, we must continue to immunize our communities because the microbes that cause vaccine-preventable diseases are still out there.¹³⁰

Recommended immunization schedules are based on an individual’s age, health status and potential for exposure. Individuals must communicate with health care providers to ensure they receive all recommended vaccines. By tracking the incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases and immunization rates, we can determine areas of strength and weakness within the public health system. We can ensure that “our boat does not fill with water,” ensure access for all populations, and generally help bring a greater acceptance of immunizations to the community. Additionally, if we do see outbreaks, we are able to stop the spread through additional actions to halt the disease transmission.



a story

Johnny just began kindergarten. His family chose to opt out of having him fully immunized before starting school. Johnny missed several weeks of school due to getting very sick and is struggling to adjust due to his absence.



The World Bank states immunizations should be among the first public health initiatives in which governments around the world invest.¹³¹ Vaccines are considered to be the most cost-beneficial health intervention and one of the few that systematically demonstrates far more benefits than costs. A review of 587 life-saving interventions and their cost-effectiveness indicated that routine immunization programs for children were among the ones with better cost-effectiveness.¹³²

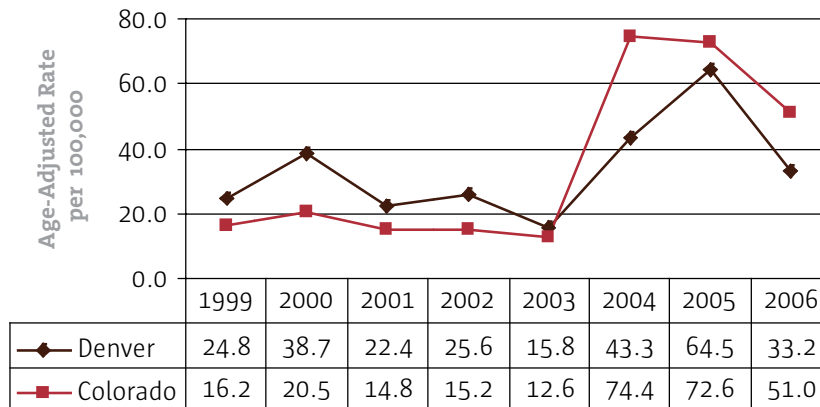
Health Indicator: Immunization

DID YOU KNOW?



- In the U.S., vaccines have reduced or eliminated many infectious diseases that once routinely killed or harmed many infants, children, and adults. However, the viruses and bacteria that cause vaccine-preventable disease and death still exist and can be passed on to people who are not protected by vaccines.

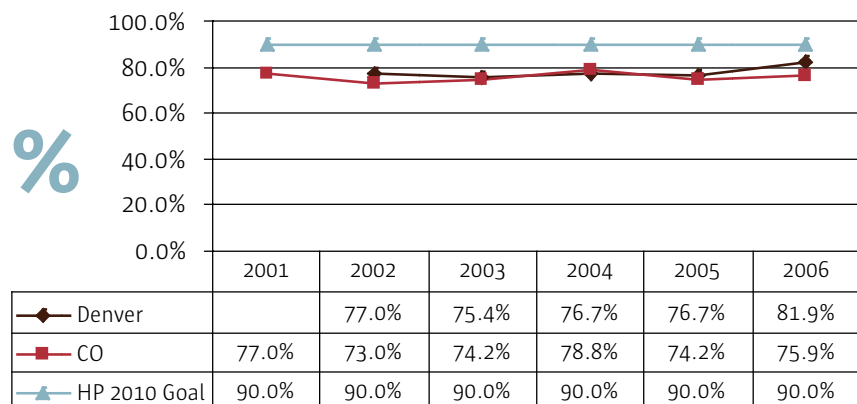
Vaccine Preventable Diseases, 1999-2006



Immunizations are the key to decreasing all vaccine preventable diseases.

Colorado Electronic Disease Reporting System (CEDRS), Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Proportion of Adults >65 Vaccinated Annually Against Influenza, 2001-2006

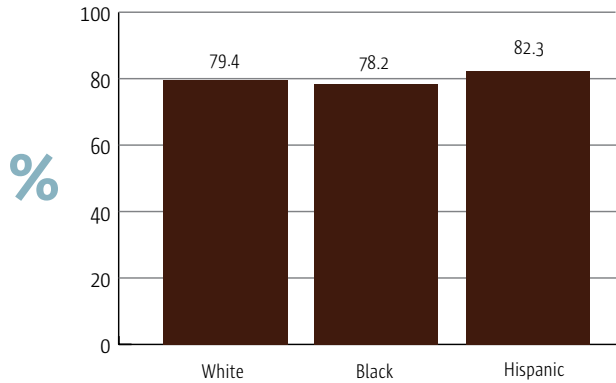


Adults age 65 and older are at higher risk of complications associated with influenza. As a result, it is recommended they receive annual vaccinations.

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

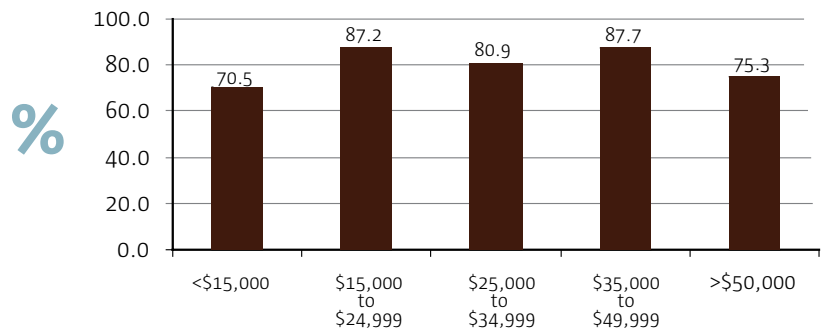
Health Indicator: Immunization

Proportion of Adults >65 Vaccinated Annually Against Influenza by Race/Ethnicity, Denver, 2005-2006



Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Proportion of Adults >65 Immunized Annually for Influenza by Income, Denver, 2005-2006



Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

CALL TO ACTION

- Increase awareness of the importance of immunizations and how to get them through the media and other forms of mass communication. Continue vigilance to vaccinate our communities protects not only us, but our grandchildren and their grandchildren.