



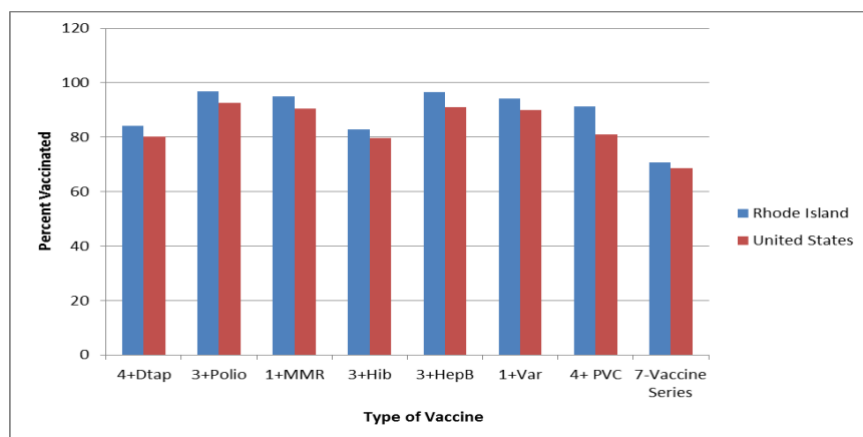
Rhode Island Public Health Brief

Rhode Island Childhood Vaccination

Immunization against vaccine preventable disease

Vaccines are a powerful public health tool used for immunization against numerous preventable, potentially serious, communicable diseases. The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) closely monitors trends in incidence and prevalence of infectious diseases preventable through participation in immunization programs available throughout the state. Rhode Island vaccination programs are structured based on recommendations

Figure 1 Vaccination Coverage Rates among Adolescents 13-17 Years of Age



and guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and in line with The Advisory Committee on Immunization practices (ACIP).

The ACIP, in accordance with the CDC, recommend routine combined 7-vaccine series vaccination coverage for children be completed before the age of 24 months in order to provide immunization against diseases including whooping cough, measles, mumps and chickenpox.ⁱ While no federal laws regarding immunization exist, state law

and governments are responsible for establishing vaccination requirements for children.ⁱ

Source: State of Rhode Island: Department of Health. (n.d.). Retrieved February 17, 2020, from <https://health.ri.gov/data/schools/immunization/results.php>

Currently, Rhode Island law mandates children have documented immunization against 14 vaccine preventable diseases before entering a licensed day care facility or preschool. In addition, the state requires children in grades kindergarten through 12 to meet further immunization requirements to maintain enrollment in a school system. By law, children are only permitted exemption from vaccination for documented medical or religious reasons in the state of Rhode Island.ⁱⁱ

Reasons behind refusal of childhood vaccines

In 2015 the CDC reported 1.3% of 2-year olds in the United States received no vaccinations. This number had risen from 0.9% for those born in 2011.ⁱⁱⁱ Furthermore, for the third year in a row, the average rate of kindergarten age children with vaccine exemption has also risen, reaching 2.2%.^{iv}

While religious and medical exemptions are permitted in Rhode Island, there are other reasons behind why parents are choosing to not vaccinate their children. These reasons include desire to have a personal choice, fear, little or misinformation surrounding vaccines, and other philosophical reasons. Across 110 public and private schools within Rhode Island, parents of 141 kindergarten students have claimed medical or religious vaccination exemptions.ⁱⁱ

How does Rhode Island measure up?

As of 2019 Rhode Island had the sixth highest vaccination rate (97.6% of children), behind Mississippi (99.2%), West Virginia (98.8%), Louisiana (98.4%), Delaware (98.1%), and Maryland (97.9%)ⁱ

For children born between 2015 and 2016, coverage with the combined 7-vaccine series by age 24 months was 70.1% for children in Rhode Island according to the National Immunization Survey-Children (NIS-Children) and 68.5% for the nation-wide average.ⁱ State-wide, 95.8% of students entering kindergarten in Rhode Island had documentation of full immunization, meaning they received all required vaccines necessary to enter into a public or private school system.ⁱⁱ

More recently, in 2019, the U.S. saw the worst measles outbreak in the country since 1992 with 1,282 reported cases across 31 states.^v Rhode Island had no confirmed cases of measles during this outbreak, due in part to the strict MMR vaccination requirements necessary for children to enter kindergarten in the state.

Importance of vaccination programs for population health

Immunization programs and administration of childhood vaccines have significantly reduced incidence of and disability or death from infectious diseases within Rhode Island and across the country. Vaccines don't only provide personal immunization, but they also deliver community-wide protection through reduction of disease transmission.

Mandatory vaccination regulations and guidelines for children have demoted infectious diseases from being the leading cause of death among children in the early 20th century to currently being placed eighth.^{vi} In comparison to the early 1900's, in 2016 the United States saw a 100% decrease in cases of smallpox, diphtheria and polio, a greater than 99% decrease in measles and rubella, a 97% decrease in mumps, a 94% decrease in cases of tetanus, and a 92% decrease in pertussis.^{vii}

When confronted with the decision to vaccinate their child, parents should always consult with a board-certified physician specializing in pediatric medicine.

ⁱ SchoolVaxView. (2018, October 11). Retrieved February 17, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/coverage/schoolvaxview/data-reports/coverage-trend/index.html>

ⁱⁱ State of Rhode Island: Department of Health. (n.d.). Retrieved February 17, 2020, from <https://health.ri.gov/data/schools/immunization/results.php>

ⁱⁱⁱ FastStats - Immunization. (2017, March 17). Retrieved February 17, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/immunize.htm>

^{iv} Mellerson JL, Maxwell CB, Knighton CL, Kriss JL, Seither R, Black CL. Vaccination Coverage for Selected Vaccines and Exemption Rates Among Children in Kindergarten — United States, 2017–18 School Year. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2018;67:1115–1122. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6740a3>

^v Measles Cases and Outbreaks. (2020, February 3). Retrieved February 17, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/cases-outbreaks.html>

^{vi} Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention. National health statistics, leading cause of deaths 1900-1998. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/dvs/lead1900_98.pdf. Accessed February 17, 2020.

^{vii} Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention. Achievements in public health, 1900-1999. Impact of vaccines universally recommended for children, United States, 1990-1998. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. 1999;48(12).