EXPLAINER:

Types of ACIP Recommendations for Vaccines

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The Centers for Disease Controland Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) is responsible for developing recommendations on the use of vaccines in the United States. These recommendations—which are ultimately reviewed and approved by the CDC before being adopted into policy—play an important role in guiding healthcare providers, government officials, and public health experts on how vaccines should be administered across various populations to ensure maximum public health protection.

The type of recommendation(s) ACIP issues for a specific vaccine is informed by a range of considerations including the safety and efficacy of the vaccine when given at specific ages, the severity of the disease, the number of people who get the disease if no vaccine is available, how well the vaccine works across different age groups, and how practical the recommendations are to put into practice.[1]

Key ACIP vaccine recommendation types include[2]:

ROUTINE RECOMMENDATIONS

A routine recommendation is the most common type of recommendation issued by ACIP and calls for a vaccine to be administered to all members of the general population or a specific age group on a regular basis. These recommendations are usually incorporated into standard immunization schedules and are meant to provide broad based protection against the most common vaccine-preventable infectious diseases.

EXAMPLE: ACIP recommends that almost everyone 6 months and older receive an updated flu vaccine on an annual basis.[3]

CATCH-UP RECOMMENDATIONS

A catch-up recommendation specifies that a vaccine should be administered to individuals who missed a vaccine when they were younger or who otherwise did not receive a vaccine according to CDC's immunization schedules to ensure they are up to date with recommended vaccines. This type of recommendation may also be made when a new vaccine is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as a means to ensure individuals who either were not previously vaccinated against a particular disease or who received an earlier version of the vaccine, can receive the updated vaccine to benefit from its improved protection.

EXAMPLE: The routine schedule for pneumococcal vaccines includes a series of doses administered to children under 2 years old. Catch-up recommendations are in place for pneumococcal vaccines for children ages 2-5 years old who may have missed scheduled doses earlier in life.[4]

RISK-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS

A risk-based recommendations is issued when it has been determined that a vaccine may be beneficial to specific groups of people who are at increased risk of contracting or experiencing severe outcomes of a specific disease. These recommendations are often targeted to provide protection to individuals with certain health conditions, lifestyles, occupations, or living conditions.

EXAMPLE: For adults 60-74 years of age, ACIP recommends a risk-based approach to vaccination for RSV. This means that for adults in this age range, vaccination is recommended for those with certain chronic health conditions and/or those living in nursing home settings, which can increase the risk of severe RSV.[5]

SHARED CLINICAL DECISION-MAKING (SCDM) RECOMMENDATIONS

A SCDM recommendation is made when individuals may benefit from vaccination, but broad vaccination is unlikely to have population-level impacts. SCDM recommendations acknowledge that the benefits of vaccination may vary depending on personal health status or preferences and stipulate that vaccination decisions be made jointly by the healthcare provider and the patient with consideration for the individual benefits and risks.

EXAMPLE: For adults aged 27-45, the HPV vaccine is recommended on the basis of shared clinical decision-making. This means that for this population, the decision to vaccinate is determined through a discussion between the patient and their healthcare provider, as this vaccine may offer benefits to some—but not all—individuals in this age group.[6]

[1] https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/committee/role-vaccine-recommendations.html
[2] https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/index.html
[3] https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/rr/rr7202a1.htm
[4] https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/downloads/child/job-aids/pneumococcal.pdf
[5] https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7229a4.htm
[6] https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6832a3.htm