

Avoid Vaccine Administration Errors with Seven Simple Steps

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Vaccine administration is a critical component of any successful immunization program. Yet, many common administration errors could be avoided by consistently using seven simple “right” steps.

Welcome to CDC Audio Rounds. I’m Dr. Andrew Kroger, a medical officer in the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Today, I’d like to share these practical and proven steps with you. By working together, we can ensure your patients receive safe, effective vaccine administration each and every time they come in to be immunized.

Number one: the right patient.

Make sure you’re vaccinating the right person. This may seem obvious, but mistakes are sometimes made. It’s also important to verify that the patient has been properly screened so you know which vaccines are needed and which ones might need to be avoided because of medical conditions.

Number two: the right vaccine.

Check your vials *three* times to make sure you have the correct vaccine in hand. In addition, make sure your vaccines and their diluents are potent. In other words, check those expiration dates.

Number three: the right time.

Make sure the patient is the appropriate age. Also, verify that he or she is being vaccinated at an appropriate interval from other doses of the same or different vaccines.

Number four: the right dosage.

Vaccine dosage is based on the patient’s age, not their weight. Vaccines differ from other medications in this respect.

Number five: the right route.

Whether oral, intranasal, subcutaneous, or intramuscular, this will vary by the type of vaccine, and requires the appropriate administration technique. Correct needle length is essential.

Number six: the right site.

This step is partially dependent on the previous step, the correct route. It’s also related to the patient’s age. There are resources available to help determine the right route, site, technique, and needle length. For example, in the January 2011 General Recommendations on Immunization, there are tables that relate age, gender, site, and technique to guide administration by a particular route.

And last but not least, **number seven: the right documentation.**

This is critical to ensure that your patient receives the correct number of doses for adequate protection. It also ensures that you don't give an extra dose, which can cause a local reaction and waste valuable vaccine.

All staff, both permanent and temporary, who administer vaccines need competency-based education and training. Make sure this happens *before* they provide vaccines to patients. When assessing staff, use a checklist and highlight vaccine administration skills and practices. Anytime there are new schedules, vaccines, or recommendations, make sure your staff has access to appropriate continuing education.

If you'd like more information on the prevention of administration errors, visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/ed.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.