

Capital BlueCross Finds Sharp Drop in Childhood Vaccinations Due to Pandemic Parents Urged to Keep Children's Vaccinations Updated to Avoid Preventable Diseases

HARRISBURG, Pa., Nov. 18, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to an alarming drop in childhood immunizations for preventable diseases such as measles, whooping cough, and polio, according to data released today by Capital BlueCross.

The number of medical claims the insurer received for childhood immunizations fell by 19% in the first nine months of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019, meaning nearly 17,000 vaccine doses were missed.

"This is a troubling trend that could have devastating consequences," said Dr. Jennifer Chambers, Capital BlueCross' chief medical officer. "Children missing vaccines not only puts their health and well-being at risk, but it also threatens to undermine community protection – the so-called 'herd immunity' - for these highly contagious diseases, some of which were considered largely eradicated decades ago."

To address the situation, Capital BlueCross is urging parents to check on a child's immunization status by calling their pediatrician. If vaccinations have been missed, consult with the pediatrician on the best course of action to get caught up.

An examination of Capital BlueCross' childhood immunization claims from January through September 2020 shows:

- DTaP vaccinations (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis) dropped 18% from 2019, representing about 13,500 missed immunizations.
- MMR vaccinations (for measles, mumps, and rubella) fell 24% from last year, representing nearly 3,000 missed immunizations.
- Vaccinations for polio declined 26% from last year, representing more than 500 missed immunizations.

Capital BlueCross saw the largest drop in immunization claims occur in March through May, coinciding with the initial wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The pandemic undoubtedly led many parents to cancel or delay medical appointments for their children, but vaccinations are simply too important to put off for long," Dr. Chambers said. "If parents think their children are behind on vaccinations, they should contact their pediatrician to get back on schedule as quickly as possible. Swift action could save lives."

The pandemic led to stay-at-home orders across the country and the closure of many schools and businesses. The BlueCross BlueShield Association estimates 9 million childhood vaccination doses could be missed nationwide in 2020. A BCBSA survey found 40% of parents attributed their child's missed vaccinations to the pandemic shutdown.

About Capital BlueCross

For more than 80 years, [Capital BlueCross](#) has served Central Pennsylvania and the Lehigh Valley by offering health insurance products, services and technology solutions that provide peace of mind to consumers and promote health and wellness for our members. The company delivers innovative solutions through a family of diversified businesses to create healthier lives and lower healthcare costs. Among these solutions are patient-focused care models, leading-edge data analytics and digital health technologies. Additionally, Capital BlueCross Connect health and wellness centers provide in-person service and inspiration to help people reach their health goals. Capital BlueCross is an independent licensee of the BlueCross BlueShield Association.

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