

## Vermont Immunization Program

# 2013 Annual Report

Immunizations are the single most important way to protect your family against serious and sometimes deadly diseases. Many of the diseases that vaccines prevent can't be easily treated or cured. Some are especially dangerous for infants and young children as they spread easily from person to person. Even one infected person can cause an outbreak of diseases like measles and chickenpox.

The Immunization Program conducts ongoing assessments of population health status to identify populations at risk for vaccine preventable disease, and to find opportunities to reduce risk and promote health. Program activities are developed based on best practices to ensure access to affordable vaccines, support vaccination in the medical home, and provide the public with information needed to vaccinate with confidence.

### Data highlights

The vast majority of Vermonters are immunized, but a small number of children and adults are not. The following data outlines the populations of concern and opportunities for increased protection.

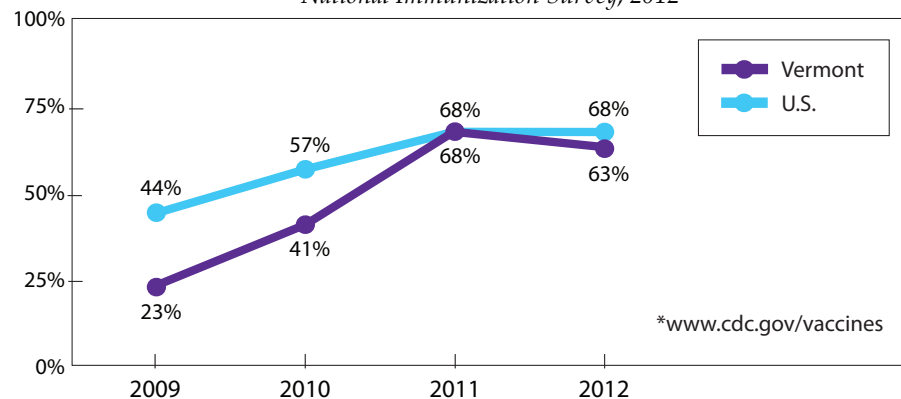
#### Vermont immunization rates, 19–35 month olds, by vaccine (National Immunization Survey, 2012)

Immunization rates for Vermont toddlers (19–35 months) are below state and national goals, according to new statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Results from the 2012 National Immunization Survey show that 63 percent of children under 3 years of age in Vermont received the full series of recommended vaccines. The 2012 U.S. rate was 68 percent, and the Healthy People 2020 goal for the series is 80 percent. In Vermont, immunization rates for individual vaccines such as measles, polio, pertussis and pneumococcal dropped in 2012 after three years of increasing rates.



**Vermont children 19–35 months who completed the full immunization series\***

*National Immunization Survey, 2012*

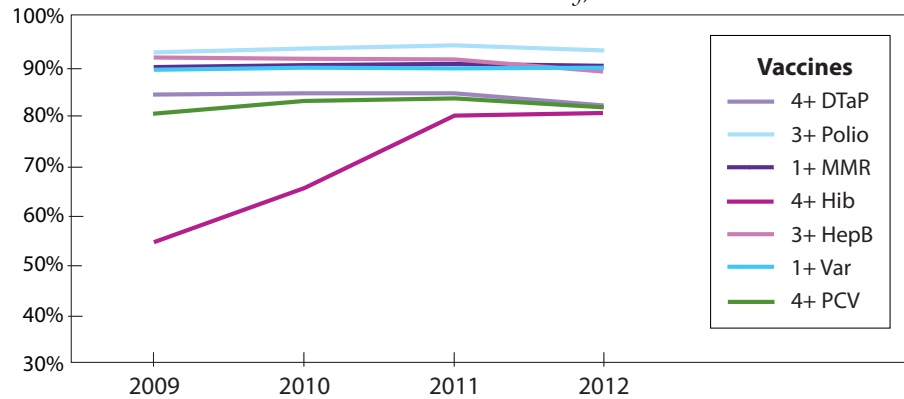


The Health Department’s Immunization Program has a number of initiatives to support childhood vaccination. In the past year, major projects included:

- Launch of the “It’s OK to Ask” social marketing campaign, to provide a reliable information resource for parents of young children who have questions about immunizations.
- Site visits to over 90 percent of primary care practices to ensure full compliance with CDC program requirements.
- Mailing of reminder letters to parents of children 8 and 20 months of age who aren’t up to date on immunizations to ensure timely vaccination.



**Vermont immunization rates for children 19–35 months**  
National Immunization Survey, 2009–2012



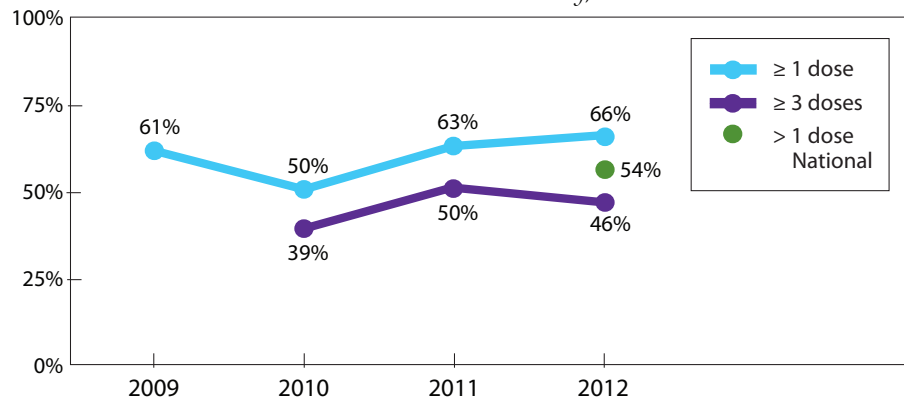
**Vermont and national data for teens (National Immunization Survey, 2012)**

The percentage of Vermont teens immunized with a booster to protect against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis increased by 5 percent in the past three years, and is now at 93 percent, well above the national rate of 85 percent. The percentage of teens who received the vaccine to prevent meningitis in the past four years increased from 44 percent to 73 percent, just below the national average of 74 percent.

HPV is an anti-cancer vaccine that is recommended for everyone 11–26 years. Vermont HPV vaccination rates for females have consistently been higher than the national average. HPV vaccination rates have not kept pace with those of other teen vaccines, leaving Vermont teens at unnecessary risk for a number of cancers. To increase vaccination uptake among both girls and boys, the Health Department is working with the Vermont-American Academy of Pediatrics and the Vermont Child Health Improvement Program to provide education and training for primary care providers, and highlight effective strategies to increase acceptance of HPV vaccination by parents.

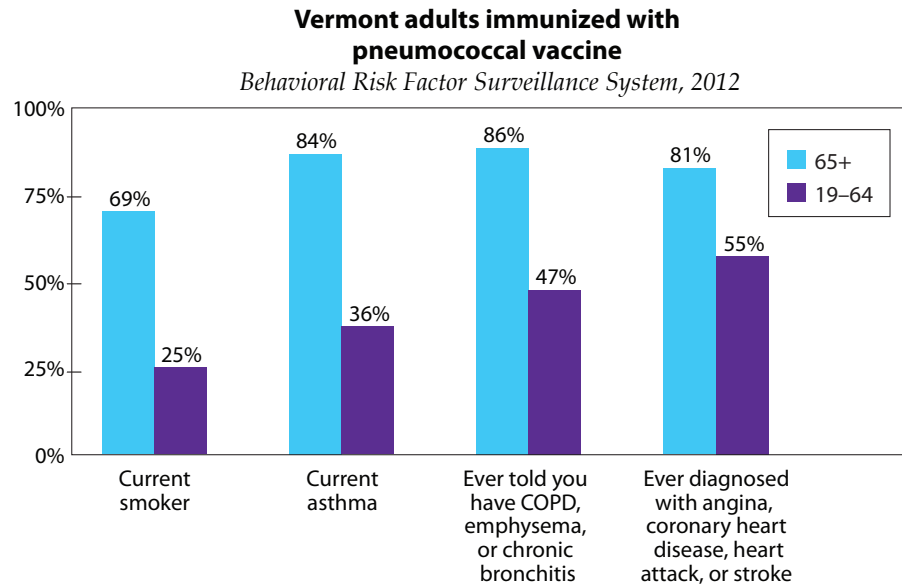


**Vermont female teens vaccinated with HPV**  
National Immunization Survey, 2009–2012



**Pneumococcal disease in adults**

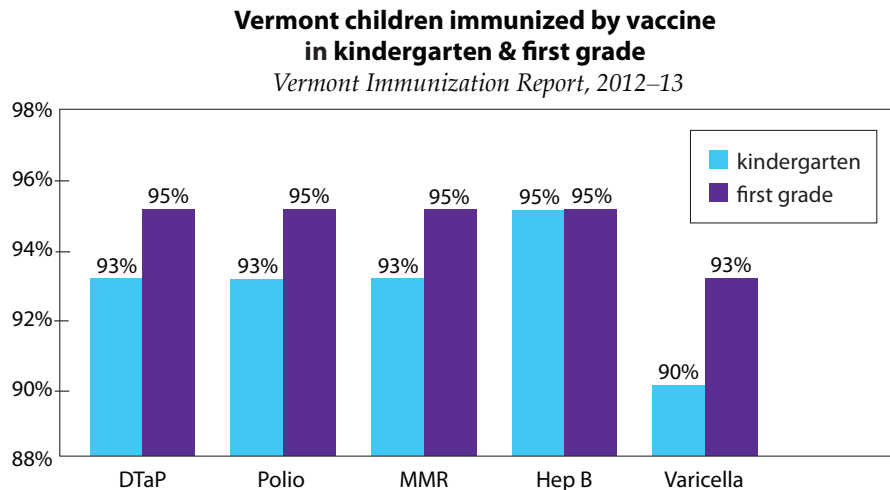
Pneumococcal bacteria can cause pneumonia, blood infections and meningitis. Such infections can lead to deafness, brain damage and even death because it can be difficult to treat these infections. The pneumococcal vaccine is recommended for everyone age 65 and older, and for those 19–64 years who are smokers or have chronic respiratory, cardiac or kidney disease.



**Setting-specific data**

**School**

Immunization reports were completed by 100 percent of all public and private schools. The percentage of students entering kindergarten who were fully immunized, which means that they have received all doses of all required vaccines, was consistent over the past two years — 86.9 percent in 2012–2013 and 87.0 percent for the previous year. The rates have increased by 4 percent since 2010–2011:

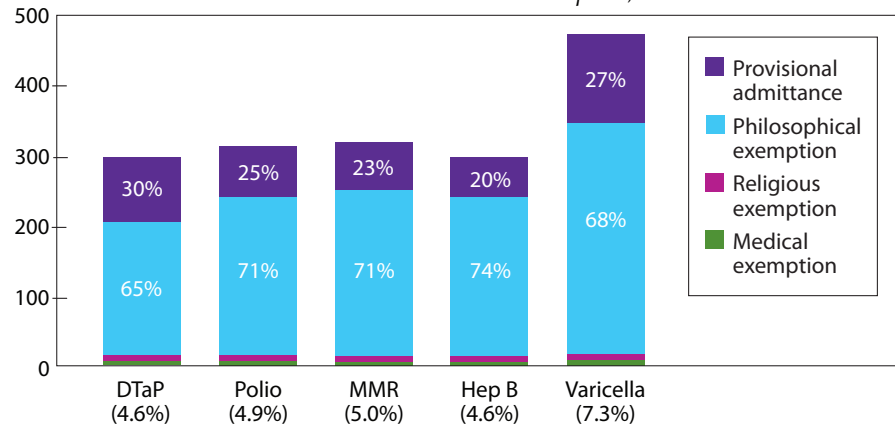


New reporting on children in the first grade has shown an increase in immunization rates.



### First grade students who did not meet vaccine requirements

*Vermont School Immunization Reports, 2012–13*



Recent efforts to reduce the percentage of children who don't meet immunization requirements have made an impact. In 2012–13, only 7 percent of kindergarten students were provisionally admitted, which was the lowest rate in five years. However, during the same school year, the philosophic exemption rate remained high at 5.5 percent. Of those students who had not received a specific vaccine, philosophic exemptions were identified as the primary reason. Health Department nurses are working with school nurses across Vermont to ensure that parents are informed about required immunizations. All components of the revised statute on vaccine exemptions in schools 18 V.S.A. § 1122, passed in 2012, have been fully implemented by the Health Department.

#### Child care

Immunization reporting for all children enrolled in licensed or registered child care has been required in Vermont for only three years. In 2011 and 2012, fewer than 55 percent of facilities complied with the reporting requirement. Over 94 percent of children for whom immunization reports were submitted had received every required vaccine. The Health Department is working with the Department of Children and Families to increase reporting by child care facilities to better assess coverage rates and identify ways to ensure children have been vaccinated.

#### Health care workers

Vaccination of health care workers against influenza has been recommended by numerous professional organizations because this is shown to reduce transmission of flu among staff and patients. The 2012 Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey found that 59 percent of Vermont health care workers received a flu shot in the past 12 months, while only 39 percent of non-health care workers received the flu vaccine. Many Vermont health care facilities are taking steps to ensure health care workers have been vaccinated against the flu.

### Looking ahead

The cornerstones of a successful immunization program are effective parental education, universal access to vaccines, collaboration with health care providers, and a fully operational immunization registry. This foundation supports maintenance of high immunization rates and low rates of vaccine preventable disease. In 2013, we:

- Launched a unique social marketing campaign to support parents decision to vaccinate with confidence.
- Purchased vaccine valued at over \$13 million.
- Facilitated vaccine ordering and management in over 215 primary care practices across Vermont.

Through ongoing evaluation and integration of public health efforts with health care reform, we will work to build on program successes, effectively meet new challenges, and protect the most vulnerable in our community.