Immunizations in California

What It Is
On kidsdata.org, immunizations are measured by the number and percentage of kindergartners who receive all required immunizations by the time they enter school. Data also are available for the number and percentage of kindergartners who are exempt from immunization requirements, by type of exemption. In addition, the number and rate of reported cases of vaccine-preventable childhood diseases are provided for diphtheria, hepatitis A, hepatitis B (acute), measles, meningococcal disease, mumps, pertussis, polio, rubella, tetanus, and varicella.

Why This Topic Is Important
Immunizations are among the most successful and cost-effective preventive health care interventions, protecting millions of children worldwide from serious and potentially fatal infectious diseases. For each U.S. birth cohort that receives routine vaccinations, it is estimated that at least 40,000 lives are saved and 20 million illnesses are prevented, at a savings of approximately $70 billion in total societal costs. Current immunization schedules recommend that children and adolescents receive vaccinations for diseases such as measles, mumps, whooping cough (pertussis), polio, and varicella (chickenpox). Annual immunization against influenza also is recommended. Vaccinations are important for the protection of the individual child as well as for the protection of others with whom an infected child might come into contact, as most vaccine-preventable diseases are spread through air or direct contact.

How Children Are Faring
In 2019, 94.8% of California kindergartners had received all state-required immunizations by the time they entered school, up from a low of 90.2% in 2014. Across counties with data, the percentage of kindergartners with all required immunizations ranged from more than 99% (Modoc) to less than 72% (Sutter) in 2019.

Statewide, 5.2% of kindergartners were exempt from immunization requirements in 2019: 0.9%

Definition: Percentage of children in kindergarten with all required immunizations (e.g., in 2019, 94.8% of California kindergartners had all required immunizations). Data Source: California Dept. of Public Health, Immunization Branch, Kindergarten Data and Reports (Jun. 2019).

Number of Kindergartners with Immunization Exemptions

California

Definition: Number of children in kindergarten with immunization exemptions, by exemption type (e.g., in 2017, 4,812 California kindergartners had permanent medical exemptions).

Data Source: California Dept. of Public Health, Immunization Branch.
Pertussis Infections per 100,000 Californians

Definition: Number of reported cases of vaccine-preventable childhood diseases per 100,000 population, by disease (e.g., in 2017, there were 8 cases of pertussis per 100,000 Californians).


In 2017, 4,539 cases of vaccine-preventable childhood diseases were reported to the state department of public health, a rate of 11.5 infections per 100,000 Californians. As in previous years, pertussis (whooping cough) accounted for the majority of these cases. Pertussis outbreaks are cyclic, with peaks every three to five years. In California, the rate of pertussis infections, and of vaccine-preventable childhood disease diagnoses overall, peaked in 2010 and 2014.

View references for this text and additional research on this topic: https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/53/immunizations/summary