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Immunization throughout the Life Course at the Primary Care Level in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Version 1: 21 May 2020

Objective

Provide recommendations regarding vaccination as an essential service at the primary care level in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Considerations

- As a follow-up to the technical note on adapting the primary care level in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (1) from 23 April on interventions, modalities and areas, which seeks to ensure the continuity of essential services like immunization, these practical guidelines have been developed for the primary care level, taking into account PAHO/WHO immunization technical documents in the context of the pandemic (2) and the framework of immunization through the life course, which offers vaccines for different population groups including children, adolescents, women, adults and older adults.
- Immunization activities that are offered to the population throughout the life course are detailed, taking into account the different transmission scenarios of COVID-19 as defined by the WHO (3), and which may require adaptations and different approaches in the context of each country, to maintain immunization as an essential service in a safe way for health personnel and the community.
- Its implementation by primary care personnel implies considering recommendations on the provision, availability, and proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), hygiene control measures, and the availability of devices, cold chain and logistics always required.
- These guidelines are aimed at primary care teams, those responsible for immunization programs at the national and sub-national levels, and managers of first-level care facilities.

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Immunization throughout the Life Course during the COVID-19 Pandemic

COMPONENTS	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4
	NO CASES	SPORADIC CASES	CASE CLUSTERS	COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION
INSTITUTIONAL VACCINATION	<p>Maintain routine vaccination program</p> <p>Identify physical environments to re-locate vaccination services as preparation for cases appearing.</p> <p>Prepare the institution to re-organize the provision of vaccination services considering a reduction in the volume of individuals to vaccinate, previous appointments, special sessions for older adults and those with chronic diseases.</p> <p>Use measures to protect health personnel and social distancing measures.</p> <p>Inform the population on the continuation of vaccination services and</p>	<p>Schedule appointments for those who need vaccination, previous appointments, special sessions for older adults and those with chronic diseases</p> <p>Physical separation between vaccination areas and healthcare services. For example, re-location of vaccination post outside of area where patients are received, aiming to reduce contagion.</p> <p>Use measures to protect health personnel and social distancing measures.</p> <p>Inform the population on the continuation of vaccination services and the importance of attending vaccination appointments.</p>	<p>Schedule appointments for those who need vaccination, special sessions for older adults and those with chronic diseases</p> <p>Physical separation between vaccination areas and healthcare services. For example, re-location of vaccination post outside of area where patients are received, aiming to reduce contagion.</p> <p>Prioritize vaccine-preventable diseases with a potential for outbreaks, like measles (4), polio, diphtheria, influenza, and yellow fever.</p> <p>Use measures to protect health personnel and social distancing measures.</p> <p>Inform the population on the continuation of vaccination services and the importance of attending vaccination appointments.</p>	<p>Vaccinate people who spontaneously go to health services (following recommendations established in national pandemic control plan and in the cost/benefit evaluation at the local level [5]).</p> <p>Physical separation between vaccination areas and healthcare services. For example, re-location of vaccination post outside of area where patients are received, aiming to reduce contagion.</p> <p>Prioritize newborn vaccination, as well as measles, polio, diphtheria, influenza, and yellow fever vaccination.</p> <p>Use measures to protect health personnel and social distancing measures.</p> <p>Inform the population on the continuation of vaccination services and the importance of attending vaccination appointments as soon as vaccination services resume.</p>

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	the importance of attending vaccination appointments.			
VACCINATION IN MOBILE POSTS (OUTSIDE OF HEALTH UNITS)	<p>Vaccinations outside of health units, according to the national schedule in areas with measures on infection control, physical distancing, protection for health personnel.</p> <p>Inform the population on the continuation of vaccination services and the importance of attending vaccination appointments.</p>	<p>Vaccinations outside of health units, according to the national schedule in areas with measures on infection control, physical distancing, protection for health personnel.</p> <p>Use measures to protect health personnel and social distancing measures.</p> <p>Inform the population on the continuation of vaccination services.</p>	<p>Vaccinations outside of health units, according to the national schedule in areas with measures on infection control, physical distancing, protection for health personnel.</p> <p>Prioritize vaccine-preventable diseases with a potential for outbreaks, like measles, polio, diphtheria, influenza, and yellow fever.</p> <p>Use measures to protect health personnel.</p>	<p>Suspend vaccination activities until the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission has been lowered and the capacity of the health system has recovered enough to resume these activities.</p>
AT-HOME VACCINATION	<p>Identify and vaccinate unvaccinated people.</p> <p>Prioritize vaccine-preventable diseases with a potential for outbreaks, like measles, polio, diphtheria, influenza, and yellow fever.</p> <p>Use measures to protect health personnel.</p>	<p>Identify and vaccinate unvaccinated people.</p> <p>Prioritize vaccine-preventable diseases with a potential for outbreaks, like measles, polio, diphtheria, influenza, and yellow fever.</p> <p>Use measures to protect health personnel.</p>	<p>Evaluación de la conveniencia de realizar vacunación domiciliaria de acuerdo con las condiciones epidemiológicas.</p> <p>Identify and vaccinate unvaccinated people.</p> <p>Prioritize vaccine-preventable diseases with a potential for outbreaks, like measles, polio, diphtheria, influenza, and yellow fever.</p>	<p>Suspend vaccination activities until the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission has been lowered and the capacity of the health system has recovered enough to resume these activities.</p>

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			Use measures to protect health personnel.	
COMMUNITY VACCINATION IN RESPONSE TO OUTBREAKS OR CAMPAIGNS	Maintain community vaccination according to national guidelines.	Community vaccination in affected zones and according to vaccine-preventable diseases causing outbreaks.	Evaluate convenience of conducting community vaccination in affected zones, according to epidemiological conditions.	Suspend vaccination activities until the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission has been lowered and the capacity of the health system has recovered enough to resume these activities.
VACCINATION OF HEALTH PERSONNEL	According to the national schedule, prioritizing influenza, and measles/rubella vaccination.	According to the national schedule, prioritizing influenza, and measles/rubella vaccination.	According to the national schedule, prioritizing influenza, and measles/rubella vaccination.	According to the national schedule, prioritizing influenza, and measles/rubella vaccination.
EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE	Surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases according to national norm.	Surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases with measures to protect health personnel and social distancing measures.	Surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases with measures to protect health personnel and social distancing measures.	Surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases with measures to protect health personnel and social distancing measures.
MONITORING	DTP3 vaccination coverage at sub-national levels, with special attention on vulnerable groups (indigenous, displaced). Monitoring supplies, stocks, and cold chain.	DTP3 vaccination coverage at sub-national levels, with special attention on vulnerable groups (indigenous, displaced). Monitoring supplies, stocks, and cold chain.	DTP3 vaccination coverage at sub-national levels, with special attention on vulnerable groups (indigenous, displaced). Monitoring supplies, stocks, and cold chain.	DTP3 vaccination coverage at sub-national levels, with special attention on vulnerable groups (indigenous, displaced). Monitoring supplies, stocks, and cold chain.

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Cross-cutting Activities from Essential Programs at Primary Care Level

HUMAN RESOURCES	Strengthen human resources Training in PPE and infection control Training to improve capacity to respond to doubts from users and ease fears In vaccination: national schedule, cold chain, safe vaccine administration	Strengthen human resources Training in PPE and infection control Training to improve capacity to respond to doubts from users and ease fears In vaccination: national schedule, cold chain, safe vaccine administration	Strengthen human resources Training in PPE and infection control Training to improve capacity to respond to doubts from users and ease fears In vaccination: national schedule, cold chain, safe vaccine administration	Strengthen human resources Training in PPE and infection control Training to improve capacity to respond to doubts from users and ease fears In vaccination: national schedule, cold chain, safe vaccine administration
MANAGEMENT OF SUPPLY AND STOCK CHAIN	Verify availability of personal protection elements. In vaccination: monitor availability of supplies and operability of cold chain	Verify availability of personal protection elements In vaccination: monitor availability of supplies and operability of cold chain	Verify availability of personal protection elements In vaccination: monitor availability of supplies and operability of cold chain	Verify availability of personal protection elements In vaccination: monitor availability of supplies and operability of cold chain
SOCIAL COMMUNICATION	Inform population on continuation of services and importance of attending scheduled appointments. In vaccination: clear up doubts on vaccination and COVID-19	Inform population on continuation of services and importance of attending scheduled appointments. In vaccination: clear up doubts on vaccination and COVID-19 Communicate key messages to users and community on vaccination as a priority health	Inform community prior on date, place, and time for service operation to resume. In vaccination: clear up doubts on vaccination and COVID-19 Communicate key messages to users and community on vaccination as a priority health	Inform community prior on date, place, and time for service operation to resume. In vaccination: clear up doubts on vaccination and COVID-19 Communicate key messages to users and community on vaccination as a priority health service, the risks of

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	Communicate key messages to users and community on vaccination as a priority health service, the risks of vaccine-preventable diseases and benefits of vaccination.	service, the risks of vaccine-preventable diseases and benefits of vaccination.	service, the risks of vaccine-preventable diseases and benefits of vaccination.	vaccine-preventable diseases and benefits of vaccination.

References

1. <https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/52223>
2. The Immunization Program in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic, version 2: 24 April 2020 (<https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/52055>); Vaccination of Newborns in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic, version 1: 18 May 2020 (<https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/52227>)
3. <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/critical-preparedness-readiness-and-response-actions-for-covid-19>
4. Measles field guide, 2005, <https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/49144>
5. <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/framework-for-decision-making-implementation-of-mass-vaccination-campaigns-in-the-context-of-covid-19>

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