

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant drop in well-child visits has resulted in delays in vaccinations.¹ Pediatricians nationwide have adapted to provide appropriate elements of well exams through telemedicine when clinically warranted. However, additional elements require in-person visits. Concern exists that delays in vaccinations may result in secondary outbreaks of vaccine-preventable illnesses.

Despite being an initial COVID-19 hot spot, the state of Washington is highlighting the importance of regular pediatric well visits and vaccination and made a list of recommended practices for pediatricians and family care practitioners to administer vaccines while protecting patients and staff:

- Limit well visits to early morning and use the rest of the day for sick visits.
- Dedicate specific clinics, buildings, or rooms for sick visits and for well visits.
- Conduct well visits for newborns, and for infants and younger children who require immunizations and reschedule well visits for older children at a later date.
- Lower the number of patients on site at any one time. Think about closing a waiting room or registration area and have patients check in by phone from the parking lot.
- Consider different entrances in your clinic for sick and well patients.
- Clearly mark entrances for patients who are at high risk for COVID-19.
- Tell patients who are ill to use telemedicine or a phone call. Some chronic conditions may be safely managed by a phone consult or telemedicine visit.
- Examine patients by car visit. Tell patients to drive to the clinic and wait in their car while staff go outside to check on them.
- Administer vaccines to patients in their car.
- Screen all patients and caregivers for high-risk symptoms.²

Review your state-specific guidance and relevant national health authority guidelines; and Merck Vaccines will continue to share relevant information and recommended practices as they become available.

This communication is not an endorsement of any specific measures. Each health care provider office will need to determine what measures may be appropriate in light of the practice's specific circumstances to determine how best to manage patient visits.

At this time, there are no clinical data related to the administration of any of the Merck vaccines in patients diagnosed with COVID-19; therefore, the safety and efficacy of Merck vaccines in this population are not known.

References:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. May 8, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/pdfs/mm6919e2-H.pdf>. 2. Washington State Department of Health. Please continue vaccinating patients during COVID-19 pandemic. Updated on April 10, 2020. <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/PleaseContinueVaccinatingPatients.pdf>