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| **Urgent Action Needed to Catch Up on Childhood Vaccines Before Kids Head Back to School** While most attention to vaccines has focused on COVID-19, a new report points to the fact that 11 million routine childhood vaccines were missed during the pandemic, putting children at greater risk of preventable diseases like the measles, whooping cough and the mumps. Missed well-child visits and delayed routine vaccinations due to the pandemic and worries about medical costs for families impacted by the pandemic’s economic fallout have likely led to this concerning but reversible trend. Researchers estimate that there was a cumulative 27 percent decline in pediatric office visits over the course of 2020. In order to regain lost ground and restore the vaccination rate to safe levels, advocates, state agencies, and providers need a coordinated and far-reaching public education campaign, according to a new report by the American Academy of Pediatrics and Georgetown University Center for Children and Families. “Without an intentional effort to get childhood vaccines on track, the risk of a secondary outbreak from a preventable infectious disease on top of the current pandemic remains high,” said AAP President Lee Savio Beers, MD, FAAP. “Parents: reach out to your children’s pediatrician to catch up on vaccinations before the school year begins.”A decrease in vaccination rates could result in fewer communities reaching herd immunity for preventable diseases. A locality achieves herd immunity when the spread of an infectious disease is unlikely because a certain percentage of the population is vaccinated and therefore immune to the disease. “For a wide range of reasons, children of color and from lower income families are less likely to be fully up-to-date on routine childhood immunizations,” said Georgetown University’s Kelly Whitener. “As children start heading back to the classroom, state and local health departments should work with the schools and community organizations to reach those who are more likely to have missed routine vaccinations --- such as children enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP.” Safe and effective vaccines are available to protect children from a wide range of diseases and are often offered free of charge. Parents should contact their pediatrician or local health department for more information. *This brief was published by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families as part of “Keeping Kids Connected to Care During COVID-19 and Beyond,” a project supported by the David and Lucille Packard Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.* |

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