You Must Give Your Patients Vaccine Information Statements (VISs) – It’s Federal Law!

What are Vaccine Information Statements (VISs)?

Vaccine Information Statements (VISs) are documents produced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in consultation with panels of experts and parents, to properly inform vaccinees (or their parents/legal representatives) about the risks and benefits of each vaccine. VISs are not meant to replace interactions with healthcare providers, who should address any questions or concerns that the vaccinee (or parent/legal representative) may have.

Using VISs is legally required!

Federal law (under the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act) requires a healthcare provider to give a copy of the current VIS to an adult patient or to a child’s parent/legal representative before vaccinating an adult or child with a dose of the following vaccines: diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, measles, mumps, rubella, polio, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib), influenza, pneumococcal conjugate, meningococcal, rotavirus, human papillomavirus (HPV), or varicella (chickenpox).

Where to get VISs

All available VISs can be downloaded from the websites of the Immunization Action Coalition at www.immunize.org or CDC at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/index.html. Ready-to-copy versions may also be available from your state or local health department.

Translations: You can find VISs in more than 30 languages on the Immunization Action Coalition website at www.immunize.org.

To obtain translations of VIS in languages other than English, go to www.immunize.org/vis.

According to CDC, the appropriate VIS must be given:

- Prior to the vaccination (and prior to each dose of a multi-dose series);
- Regardless of the age of the vaccinee;
- Regardless of whether the vaccine is given in a public or private healthcare setting.

Top 10 Facts About VISs

**FACT 1** It’s federal law! You must give current* VISs to all your patients before vaccinating them.

Federal law requires that VISs must be used for patients of ALL ages when administering these vaccines:

- DTaP (includes DT)
- Td and Tdap
- Hib
- hepatitis A
- hepatitis B
- HPV
- influenza (inactivated and live, intranasal)
- MMR and MMRV
- meningococcal (MenACWY, MenB)
- pneumococcal conjugate
- polio
- rotavirus
- varicella (chickenpox)

For the vaccines not covered under the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act (i.e., adenovirus, anthrax, Japanese encephalitis, pneumococcal polysaccharide, rabies, typhoid, yellow fever, and zoster), providers are not required by federal law to use VISs unless they have been purchased under CDC contract. However, CDC recommends that VISs be used whenever these vaccines are given.

**FACT 2** VISs can be given to patients in a variety of ways.

In most medical settings, VISs are provided to patients (or their parents/legal representatives) in paper form. However, VISs also may be provided using electronic media. Regardless of the format used, the goal is to provide a current VIS just prior to vaccination.

Most current versions of VISs (table)

As of March 21, 2018, the most recent versions of the VISs are as follows:

- Adenovirus .............. 6/11/14
- Anthrax ................. 3/21/18
- Cholera ................. 7/6/17
- DTaP ..................... 5/17/07
- Hib ...................... 4/2/15
- Hepatitis A ............. 7/20/16
- Hepatitis B ............. 7/20/16
- HPV ...................... 12/2/16
- Influenza .............. 8/7/15
- Japanese enceph ... 1/24/14
- MenACWY ............. 3/31/16
- MenB ................. 8/9/16
- MMR ................. 2/12/18
- MMRV ............... 2/12/18
- Multi-vaccine ...... 11/5/15
- PCV13 ................. 11/5/15
- PPSV ................. 4/24/15
- Polio ................... 7/20/16
- Rabies ................. 10/6/09
- Rotavirus .............. 2/23/18
- Td ...................... 4/11/17
- Tdap ................... 2/24/15
- Typhoid ............... 5/29/12
- Varicella .............. 2/12/18
- Yellow fever ........ 3/30/11
- Zoster ................. 2/12/18

A handy list of current VIS dates is also available at www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2029.pdf.
Prior to vaccination, VIS may be:

- Provided as a paper copy
- Offered on a permanent, laminated office copy
- Downloaded by the vaccinee (parent/legal representative) to a smartphone or other electronic device (VISs have been specially formatted for this purpose)
- Made available to be read before the office visit, e.g., by giving the patient or parent a copy to take home during a prior visit, or telling them how to download or view a copy from the Internet. These patients must still be offered a copy in one of the formats described previously to read during the immunization visit, as a reminder.

Regardless of the way the patient is given the VIS to read, providers must still offer a copy (which can be an electronic copy) of each appropriate VIS to take home following the vaccination. However, the vaccinee may decline.

FACT 3 VISs are required in both public and private sector healthcare settings.

Federal law requires the use of VISs in both public and private sector settings, regardless of the source of payment for the vaccine.

FACT 4 You must provide a current VIS before a vaccine is administered to the patient.

A VIS provides information about the disease and the vaccine and must be given to the patient before a vaccine is administered. It is also acceptable to hand out the VIS well before administering vaccines (e.g., at a prenatal visit or at birth for vaccines an infant will receive during infancy), as long as you still provide a current VIS right before administering vaccines.

FACT 5 You must provide a current VIS for each dose of vaccine you administer.

The most current VIS must be provided before each dose of vaccine is given, including vaccines given as a series of doses. For example, if 5 doses of a single vaccine are required (e.g., DTaP), the patient (parent/legal representative) must have the opportunity to read the information on the VIS before each dose is given.

FACT 6 You must provide VISs whenever you administer combination vaccines.

If you administer a combination vaccine that does not have a stand-alone VIS (e.g., Kinrix, Quadracel, Pediarix, Pentacel, Twinrix) you should provide the patient with individual VISs for the component vaccines, or use the Multi-Vaccine VIS (see below).

FACT 7 VISs should be given in a language/format that the recipient can understand, whenever possible.

For patients who don’t read or speak English, the law requires that providers ensure all patients (parent/legal representatives) receive a VIS, regardless of their ability to read English. To obtain VISs in more than 30 languages, visit the Immunization Action Coalition website at www.immunize.org/vis. Providers can supplement VISs with visual presentations or oral explanations as needed.

FACT 8 Federal law does not require signed consent in order for a person to be vaccinated.

Signed consent is not required by federal law for vaccination (although some states may require it).

FACT 9 To verify that a VIS was given, providers must record in the patient’s medical record (or permanent office log or file) the following information:

- The edition date of the VIS (found on the back at the right bottom corner)
- The date the VIS is provided (i.e., the date of the visit when the vaccine is administered)
- The date the vaccine is administered
- The vaccine manufacturer and lot number

FACT 10 VISs should not be altered before giving them to patients, but you can add some information.

Providers should not change a VIS or write their own VISs. However, it is permissible to add a practice’s name, address, and contact information to an existing VIS.

Additional resources on VISs and their use are available from the following organizations:

Immunization Action Coalition
- VIS general information and translations in more than 30 languages: www.immunize.org/vis

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- VIS website: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis
- VIS Facts: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/about/facts-vis.html
- VIS FAQs: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/about/vis-faqs.html