

**MYTH: Patient immunization records are kept in a national vaccination registry****FACT: While each state operates its own vaccination registry, there is no national registry that collects patient immunization records**

As concern over immunization rates for diseases such as measles and whooping cough increases, there is a growing understanding of the important role that vaccination registries – or immunization information systems (IIS) – can provide to health care providers and public health officials in monitoring immunization rates and ensuring that individuals have all recommended vaccinations. To meet these goals, vaccination registries keep a record of a patient's immunizations, including information such as the patient's name, address, birthdate, and mother's maiden name.

One common misperception among parents and others who may have concerns about sharing private health information with a vaccine registry is that vaccination data is collected on a national level and stored in a national database. Given that there exist many different national disease registries, such as those for cancer or diabetes, this misperception is not surprising.

However, the United States does not have a national IIS. Instead, each state operates its own registry, and maintains its own set of laws and policies that govern submission of data to the registry, as well as access to the data in registry. With the exception of New Hampshire which is in the process of setting up its IIS, all states now have an IIS to record immunization data from children, and some states collect immunization data for

adults as well. While most states have one registry that collects data for the entire state, some larger states like California operate smaller regional registries.

As a practical matter, the lack of a national registry may make it more challenging for patients, parents, and their health care providers to access theirs and their child's vaccination records when moving to or visiting another state. Since not all states mandate entry of vaccination information in the state IIS, a patient's vaccination records may be incomplete. Patients and parents may have difficulty producing vaccination information needed for school entry or when changing healthcare providers. As a result, the CDC encourages parents to keep their own vaccination records for their children.

The absence of a national registry may also present difficulties in the event of a disease-related public health emergency potentially involving individuals from different states. The CDC does not have access to state IIS databases, nor can states access databases from other states. Recognizing this limitation, states are increasingly adopting laws or establishing policies allowing for the sharing of vaccination registry information between states and other public health agencies.

**For More Information:**

- [See](#) our resources on vaccination laws and sharing of vaccination information here.
- [Learn](#) more about access to vaccination records and vaccination registries.
- [Explore](#) state and federal laws related to public health data collection.

Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthInfoLaw](https://twitter.com/HealthInfoLaw)