



STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM
CORDELL HULL BUILDING, 1ST FLOOR
425 - 5TH AVENUE NORTH
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243

March 9, 2010

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Beginning July 1, the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) has new immunization requirements for children enrolling in child care and school. Children who start pre-school, pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, 7th grade, or are a new student starting school in Tennessee for the first time, all will need a new official Tennessee Certificate of Immunization to provide to the school or child care provider when asked for an immunization certificate. This letter can answer some basic questions you may have about these changes.

Why have the requirements changed?

Tennessee has not changed requirements in 10 years, and we needed to update the requirements to better protect children's health. Vaccines are required to protect children from serious diseases, especially those that can spread easily in a school or pre-school setting.

What kinds of vaccines are required?

Vaccines required for school or pre-school are just some of the routine vaccines given to all infants and young children. A list of the required vaccines is attached to this letter. If you have questions about what vaccines your child has had, talk to your child's healthcare provider. If your child needs a vaccine, we suggest that you schedule a complete check up if it has been more than a year since his or her last physical exam.

What if I can't afford the vaccines?

Cost should not prevent you from vaccinating your child. Children and teens younger than age 19, who have TennCare or don't have health insurance, can receive free vaccines through the federal Vaccines for Children ("VFC") Program in participating private medical offices and health departments. Ask your child's health care provider if they participate in VFC. If your child has insurance that doesn't pay for vaccines and you can't afford them, local health departments can provide the vaccine. Health departments and VFC providers charge a small administration fee to give the free vaccine, which can be adjusted based on your income.

When and where do I get the certificate?

Health care providers will be able to use the new certificate beginning in April. If you pre-register for fall classes before you get the new certificate, you should bring in the new certificate before classes start. Parents and guardians must get the certificate from a health department or health care provider licensed in Tennessee.

Questions

You can find out more about the vaccine requirements online at <http://health.state.tn.us/CEDS/required.htm> or you can contact your healthcare provider or local health department. For general information about vaccines, visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines. For questions about school policies or health examinations, contact your local school system.

Best wishes for a safe and healthy school year!

Kelly L. Moore, MD, MPH
Medical Director, Tennessee Immunization Program

Immunization Requirement Summary: Tennessee Department of Health Rule 1200-14-1-.29

(New Requirements Underlined, Effective Dates Italicized in Parentheses)

Children enrolling in child care facilities, pre-school, pre-Kindergarten:

Infants entering child care facilities must be up to date at the time of enrollment and are required to provide an updated certificate after completing all of the required vaccines due by 18 months of age.

- Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis (DTaP, or DT if appropriate)
- Poliomyelitis (IPV or OPV)
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (1 dose of each, usually given together as MMR)
- Varicella (1 dose or history of disease)
- Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib): age younger than 5 years only (*this requirement is resumed immediately, following suspension during a national Hib vaccine shortage 2008-2009*)
- Hepatitis B (HBV) (*July 1, 2010*)
- Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV): age younger than 5 years only (*July 1, 2010*)
- Hepatitis A: 1 dose, required by 18 months of age or older (*July 1, 2010*)

Children enrolling in Kindergarten:

- Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis (DTaP, or DT if appropriate)
- Hepatitis B (HBV)
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (2 doses of each, usually given together as MMR)
- Poliomyelitis (IPV or OPV): final dose on or after the 4th birthday now required
- Varicella (2 doses or history of disease): previously only one dose was required (*July 1, 2010*)
- Hepatitis A: total of 2 doses, spaced at least 6 months apart (*July 1, 2011*)

All children entering 7th grade (including currently enrolled students):

- Tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis booster ("Tdap"): not required if a Td booster dose given less than 5 years before 7th grade entry is recorded on the DTaP/Td line (*no later than October 1, 2010*)
- Verification of immunity to varicella: 2 doses or history of disease (*July 1, 2010*)

Children who are new enrollees in a TN school in grades other than Kindergarten or 7th:

- Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis (DTaP, or DT if appropriate)
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (2 doses of each, usually given together as MMR)
- Poliomyelitis (IPV or OPV): final dose on or after the 4th birthday now required
- Varicella (2 doses or history of disease): previously only one dose was required
- Hepatitis B (HBV): previously only for Kindergarten, 7th grade entry

Children with medical or religious exemption to requirements:

- **Medical**: Physician or health department authorized to indicate specific vaccines medically exempted (because of risk of harm) on the new form. Other vaccines remain required.
- **Religious**: Requires a signed statement by the parent/guardian that vaccination conflicts with their religious tenets or practices. *If* documentation of a health examination is required by the school, it must be noted by the healthcare provider on the immunization certificate. In that case, the provider should check the box that the parent has sought a religious exemption.

Minimum ages or dose intervals: Tennessee follows published CDC guidelines. For vaccines with critical minimum age requirements (e.g., MMR, varicella) or minimum dose intervals, doses are considered valid if given up to 4 days before the minimum age or dose interval. Doses administered more than 4 days early are considered invalid and should be repeated as recommended.

Alternative proof of immunity for certain diseases: A positive serology (year of test documented) is acceptable as an alternative to immunization for measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis A, hepatitis B or varicella. For varicella, documentation of provider diagnosed varicella (year) or provider-verified history of disease given by a parent or guardian (year) also is acceptable. By documenting a history of disease, the provider is asserting that he or she is convinced that the child has had chickenpox.