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School Immunization Law

New Tdap and Varicella Vaccine Requirements for Students in Middle and High School

Changes in the Wisconsin Student Immunization law now require two different vaccines for middle and high school students. Parents are required to have their children vaccinated or claim a waiver. Use the attached Student Immunization Record form to record the date(s) of immunization(s) or claim a waiver. **The Student Immunization Record form is to be completed by the first day of school. Middle School students should return the completed form to the Pupil Services Office. High School students should return the completed form to the Attendance Office. The completed form can also be returned to your child's school during summer registration.**

New requirements for 2011-2012 school year are as follows:

Students entering the following grades:

Grades 6 through 9
Grades 10 through 11
Grade 12

Vaccine (s) required:

Tdap (1 dose) and Varicella (2 doses)
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The varicella vaccine protects against chickenpox. Previously one dose was required, now a second dose is required.

Tdap is the adolescent combination vaccine that protects against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough). Only one dose is required.

1. What do parents need to do?

Have your child vaccinated with Tdap and/or varicella if he or she has not already received the vaccine(s). Record the date(s) of the immunization (s) in the bold outlined box (es) on the enclosed Student Immunization Record form, sign it and return it to your child's school. Be sure to add the Tdap and varicella vaccine dates to the permanent immunization record you keep for your child at home. In the future, he or she may need to give these dates to other schools, colleges, or employers.

To claim a waiver for health (requires a physician's signature), religious, or personal conviction reasons, follow the instructions on the Student Immunization Record form and return the signed form to your child's school.

2. Are there exceptions to the Tdap and varicella vaccine requirements?

Yes. If your child had received a tetanus-containing vaccine (such as Td vaccine after an injury) within the last 5 years of entering the grade it is required, your child is complaint and Tdap vaccine is not required. Check the box marked "Td", on the Student Immunization Record form, enter the date it was received and return the signed form to your child's school.

Delivering opportunities and services each student needs to achieve their academic and personal potential

The second exception is for varicella vaccine. If your child had chickenpox disease or shingles, even after the 1st dose of varicella vaccine, further doses of the vaccine are not required. Check the "Yes" box to the chickenpox disease question, provide the date (year only), on the Student Immunization Record form and return the signed form to your child's school.

3. If my child meets the Tdap and varicella requirement will he or she need to get another dose in a different grade in school?

No. When a child meets the vaccine requirements for the grade to which the requirements apply, no further doses are required.

4. If my child already had pertussis (whooping cough) disease, should he or she still get the Tdap vaccine?

Children who have had pertussis disease should receive Tdap because the length of protection provided by disease is unknown and because the diagnosis can be difficult to confirm. **A previous history of pertussis is not an exception to the Tdap requirement.**

5. Where can I get Tdap and/or varicella vaccine for my child?

These vaccines are available from our child's doctor or local (Jefferson County) health department. Please have your child immunized well in advance of school opening to avoid late summer rush at doctors' offices and immunization clinics.

6. Why are these requirements being made?

From 1986 through 2004, Wisconsin had the 5th highest rate of pertussis in the nation with almost 5,000 cases being reported in 2004 alone. Pertussis outbreaks occur because protection declines 5-10 years after completion of the childhood DTP/DTaP vaccinations. Tdap is a new vaccine that is recommended for adolescents and is anticipated to help prevent pertussis from occurring, including pertussis outbreaks in schools. Pertussis is a serious disease, particularly in young infants, and it can place a significant burden on families, as a person with pertussis must stay home from work and school for a minimum of 5 days of antibiotic treatment.

Two doses of varicella vaccine have been shown to be more effective than one dose, and prevents "breakthrough disease", a mild form of the disease that can result in several lost school days.

Recommendations for both Tdap and varicella vaccines are made by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).