

What PARENTS Need To Know Frequently Asked Questions

What is the new Tdap requirement for 7th – 12th graders?

Starting July 2011, a new law (AB 354) changing California immunization requirements for all students entering 7th-12th grades goes into effect. The law requires:

For the 2011-12 school year, all students entering into 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th or 12th grades **will need proof** of an adolescent whooping cough booster shot (called "Tdap") before starting school.

Do ALL 7th – 12th grade students need to get the "Tdap" shot?

Yes. For this coming school year (2011 – 2012 school year), all students going into 7th – 12th grades must have proof of having had the Tdap booster shot before starting school. This includes current students, new students and transfer students in both public and private schools. Limited exemptions are allowed.

What is Tdap?

Tdap is a booster vaccine for older children, adolescents, and adults. It safely protects against 3 dangerous diseases: tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough (also called pertussis).

Why was the Tdap requirement added?

This new requirement will help protect your child and others in your school and community from whooping cough. Whooping cough is a serious disease that causes coughing episodes that can last for months. It can be deadly for infants. In recent years, whooping cough has been increasing in the United States. In 2010, whooping cough was epidemic in California.

When should my child get vaccinated?

Now. A large number of students need a Tdap shot before the 2011-12 school year. Avoid the rush and make sure your child can start school on time. Make an appointment for your incoming 7th – 12th grader to get a Tdap booster shot now.

Children as young as 10 years old are recommended to get vaccinated with Tdap. This will protect them against the ongoing threat of whooping cough and will meet the Tdap school requirement for when they are in 7th grade.

Keep documentation of your child's Tdap booster shot in a safe place. Your child **will need proof** of immunization in order to start the 2011-12 school year.

What if my child has had whooping cough recently or in the past?

Your child will still need a Tdap booster shot. Immunity developed after having whooping cough disease wears off, leaving your child at risk for getting whooping cough again. A Tdap booster shot is needed to both protect your child in the future and to meet the school requirement.

Why should my child get vaccinated?

In addition to it being a new requirement for starting school, children who get a Tdap booster shot will be better protected during their school years. Immunization also helps to protect others within the home, in the community, and at school. Immunizations help to prevent school closures. Many schools in California have suffered from outbreaks of whooping cough. Students got very sick and parents missed work and lost wages to care for their sick children. In some cases, schools had to close because there were not enough healthy teachers to keep schools open.

Where can my child get vaccinated?

Children should visit their regular doctor or health care provider to get their Tdap shot. Children 18 years old and younger who are uninsured or underinsured may qualify for the Vaccines for Children Program. To find a provider near you, call 1-877-243-8832 or visit: www.eziz.org/pages/vfc_locations2.html. Some local pharmacies and Health Departments may also offer the Tdap vaccine.

Are immunization exemptions allowed under California law?

The same exemptions for children entering kindergarten apply. For more information, visit the [Immunization Law](http://www.shotsforschool.org) page at www.shotsforschool.org.

What if my child has received a Tdap booster shot before 10 years of age?

Your child will be considered to have met the new school requirement with proof of getting a dose of Tdap on or after their 7th birthday. However, we recommend that children receive Tdap on or after their 10th birthday to provide better protection throughout their adolescent years.

What other immunizations should I consider for my child?

Preteens and teens are also recommended to receive vaccines against meningococcal disease (brain or blood infection), flu (influenza), HPV (human papillomavirus, a cause of cervical cancer), and any vaccine they may have missed during childhood. The recommended vaccine schedule may be found at www.getimmunizedca.org.

Should parents and others at home get the Tdap vaccine?

All persons 10 years and older are recommended to be vaccinated with Tdap now if they haven't done so to protect themselves against the ongoing threat of pertussis. Immunization also helps to protect close contacts, including young infants for whom pertussis is most severe and sometimes fatal.

Where can I go for more information?

For more information, visit the California Department of Public Health, Immunization Branch website at <http://www.getimmunizedca.org>.