



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

May 18, 2011

Dear Parent or Guardian of a Tennessee 6th through 12th grade student:

In 2010, the Tennessee Department of Health updated the immunization requirements for all students entering 7th grade or enrolling in college. Students may be kept out of class if they do not meet the requirements. Exemptions are allowed only for religious or medical reasons. The following information should help you prepare for next school year. We urge you to take care of your child's immunization needs now; don't wait for the rush!

What is a child required to have before starting 7th grade?

Children already enrolled in a Tennessee school must provide school officials with the Official Immunization Certificate showing they have received both a tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis booster ("Tdap"), and a second dose of **varicella vaccine** (the vaccine against chickenpox) if they have never had chickenpox. The Tdap booster is necessary because the childhood vaccines for these diseases wear off by the time a child is 11 or 12 years old.

What is a student required to have to go to college or technical school?

New full-time students must have proof of two doses of vaccine against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR). They also must show proof of immunity to chickenpox if they were born after 1979. They can do this by reporting their history of chickenpox illness to their healthcare provider, or by showing proof they have had two doses of varicella vaccine. A blood test also can show if a student had chickenpox. Certain students training for healthcare fields may be required to get hepatitis B vaccine before taking care of patients. Colleges may have other requirements in addition to state requirements; new students should check with the school on those requirements.

What should I do if my child hasn't had these vaccines?

Required vaccines are only some of the vaccines routinely recommended for all children and teens. Talk to your healthcare provider about the vaccines your child needs. All recommended vaccines, not just required ones, are very important to protect from life-threatening diseases. All teenagers need an annual checkup with their healthcare provider, so we recommend scheduling an appointment where vaccinations can be given.

What if I can't afford the vaccines?

The national Vaccines for Children Program provides free vaccine through many medical clinics to all children and teens younger than age 19 who have TennCare, lack health insurance or are American Indians. In addition, children whose private insurance doesn't cover vaccines also can receive VFC vaccines in community health centers and health departments. Ask your child's healthcare provider if they participate in VFC. VFC providers charge a small administration fee to give the vaccine, but that may be reduced, if necessary.

When and where do I get the certificate?

Parents and guardians must get the certificate from a health department or healthcare provider licensed in Tennessee. Your child's healthcare provider will probably have it, but if not, take your child's immunization records to a local health department in Tennessee to have the certificate completed.

Learn more about the vaccine requirements online at <http://health.state.tn.us/CEDS/required.htm> or by contacting 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 or the college or technical school your student plans to attend.

Best wishes for a safe and healthy school year!

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