

Tdap Secondary School Vaccine Requirement Questions and Answers Updated February 4, 2013

Q: What is the new pertussis booster requirement?

A: For the 2013-2014 school year, and all future school years, all students entering, advancing or transferring into 7th grade and born on or after September 15, 2000, will need proof of an adolescent tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough) booster immunization (called “Tdap”) for school in the fall.

Q: What is Tdap and what are the diseases the Tdap vaccine prevents?

A: 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).

Pertussis (also known as whooping cough) is a contagious disease that causes violent coughing fits that make it hard to breathe. It spreads easily when someone with the disease coughs or sneezes. The symptoms can last for months. Whooping cough is particularly dangerous for young babies.

Tetanus – causes a severe, painful tightening (spasms) of muscles, including of the jaw (‘lockjaw’), which can limit swallowing and breathing.

Diphtheria – is a throat infection that can lead to breathing problems, paralysis, heart failure and death.

Q: Do ALL 7th grade students that are born on or after September 15, 2000, need to receive the Tdap vaccine?

A: Yes. Unless the student has a Certificate of Immunization Exemption, all students going into 7th grade must have proof of having had the Tdap booster shot. This includes current students, new students and transfer students in both public and private schools. Many students have already received the vaccine and simply need to provide proof to the school.

Q: If a student already has a valid Medical or Religious Certificate of Immunization Exemption on file, will s/he need an updated certificate of exemption form filled out for the 7th grade Tdap vaccine requirement?

A: If a Certificate of Medical Exemption is for a specific vaccine(s), not including diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis, than yes, s/he would need a new Certificate of Medical Exemption form filled out to include those antigens. If a medical exemption form has no specific vaccines listed, then it is a valid Certificate of Immunization Exemption for all vaccines and remains valid for the student’s entire enrollment period in an Iowa licensed childcare, elementary and secondary school.

Q: Why does the new requirement include the September 15, 2000 date of birth?

A: The September 15, 2000 date of birth allows for the Tdap vaccine requirement to be phased in rather than requiring vaccine for all children 7 through 12 grades. Each subsequent school year will require Tdap vaccine for an additional grade (2013-14 school year – 7th grade, 2014-15 school year 7th and 8th grades, etc.).

Q: Will all students born after Sept 15, 2000 need to have proof of Tdap receipt or just 7th graders; the wording makes it sound as if perhaps it will be for grades 7-12?

A: For the 2013-14 school year, only students entering grades 7 and above, who were born on or after September 15, 2000, will be required to have the Tdap vaccine. If a student is entering 8th through 12th grades next year, they were generally born prior to September 15, 2000, therefore would not need proof of receipt of the Tdap dose. Likewise, if a student entering 7th grade in 2013-2014 was born before September 15, 2000, s/he will not be required to have a dose of Tdap vaccine. Eventually, in the 2018-2019 school year, all adolescents in grades 7-12 will be required to have a dose of Tdap vaccine.

Q: Why is the Tdap vaccine required?

A: This new requirement will help protect your child and others in schools and the community from whooping cough. Whooping cough is a serious disease that causes coughing fits that can last for months. In recent years, whooping cough has been increasing in the United States and in Iowa. In 2012, whooping cough has been widespread in Iowa with approximately 417% more persons with pertussis disease compared to the average of the past five years.

Q: What if my child received a dose of DTaP or Tdap between 7 and 10 years of age; will s/he still need a dose of Tdap at age 11 years?

A: No, any dose of pertussis-containing vaccine received on or after age 7 years will count as the adolescent booster dose requirement for school entry. This would be considered either an off-label use or a medication administration error, but does not require re-vaccinating the individual who received it.

Q: Why does my child need Tdap?

A: In addition to it being a new requirement for school, children who receive the Tdap booster vaccine will be better protected during their school years. Immunizations also help protect others within the home, in the community, and at school. Many schools in Iowa have suffered from outbreaks of whooping cough. Students had to stay home from school, parents missed work and lost wages to care for sick children.

Q: When should my child get vaccinated with Tdap?

A: Tdap vaccine is routinely recommended for adolescent 11 - 12 years of age and can be administered as young as 10 years of age. Now is a great time for your child to receive the Tdap vaccine and beat the back-to-school rush by making an appointment for your incoming 7th grader. Documentation of the Tdap vaccine on the Certificate of Immunization will need to be provided to your child's school prior to the first day of school.

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

A: Any protection (immunity) developed after having whooping cough disease wears off, leaving your child at risk for getting whooping cough again. A dose of pertussis containing vaccine (Tdap) is needed to both protect your child in the future and to meet the school requirement. **A Tdap dose of vaccine administered on or after the child's 7th birthday will meet the new requirement.**

Q: Instead of getting a Tdap booster to meet the new requirement, can a student get a blood test to check for protection (immunity) against pertussis?

A: No. Testing for immunity to pertussis is not reliable and does not meet the new school requirement.

Q: What if my child does not have proof of the Tdap vaccine before school starts?

A: A Certificate of Immunization that includes the Tdap vaccine must be submitted to the school your child will attend. Children that have received one dose of tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis vaccine may attend school by submitting a Provisional Certificate of Immunization. The Provisional Certificate of Immunization is valid for a maximum of 60 days which allows time for the child to receive the Tdap vaccine. If the child does not receive the vaccine by the end of the provisional enrollment period (60 days), the child will be excluded from school.

Q: Is there a grace period/extension to get the shot AFTER school starts?

A: No, there is no grace/extension period for the implementation of this requirement. All 7th grade students born on or after September 15, 2000, will need to submit a completed Certificate of Immunization with the Tdap immunization, a Certificate of Immunization Exemption or Provisional Certificate of Immunization before enrolling in school.

Q: Should parents and others at home receive the Tdap vaccine?

A: The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that ALL adults age 19 years and older should receive a dose of Tdap vaccine. Tdap should be administered regardless of interval since the last tetanus or diphtheria containing vaccine (e.g., Td). After receiving Tdap, people should receive Td every 10 years for routine booster immunization against tetanus and diphtheria.

Q: How long do I have to wait after the last tetanus containing vaccine before getting Tdap?

A: Tdap can be given regardless of the interval since the last dose of tetanus and diphtheria containing vaccine. **A Tdap dose of vaccine administered on or after the child's 7th birthday will meet the new school requirement.**

Q: How long does it take for the Tdap vaccine to provide protection?

A: As soon as the vaccine is given you start building protection but full protection generally is reached within 1-2 weeks.

Q: Will the Certificate of Immunization be updated to reflect the new requirement?

A: The second page of the Certificate of Immunization, Immunization requirements section, will be updated to include the new requirements. The new version of the Certificate of Immunization will be printed and made available at the Health Protection Clearinghouse. Certificates can be ordered by calling 1-888-398-9696 or ordered on the Immunization Program webpage at www.idph.state.ia.us/ImmTB/Products.aspx?prog=Imm&pg=Products. The Certificate of Immunization will also be updated in the Immunization Registry Information System (IRIS).

Q: Are old versions of the Certificate of Immunization valid or do all students need to be updated with a new certificate?

A: Previous versions of the Certificate of Immunization remain valid and student records do not need to be updated to the current version. Healthcare providers may continue to use existing supplies of the Certificate of Immunization and then reorder the new document once supplies are depleted.

Q: When school nurses and Local Public Health Agencies (LPHAs) review student records for enrollment in 7th grade, do all of the previously reviewed vaccines need to be reviewed again?

A: No, previously reviewed vaccines do not need to be reviewed again. Routinely when school nurses and LPHAs review student records, the certificate is marked to indicate the record has been reviewed. When this has occurred the reviewer only needs to evaluate the record for compliance with the new Tdap vaccine requirement.