

Changes in School Immunization Requirements

The Wisconsin Student Immunization Law was recently changed. Two different vaccine requirements were added which may affect your child's compliance with the law. The change will go into effect this fall with the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year. Parents are required to have their children vaccinated or claim a waiver by indicating their choice on a Student Immunization Record and returning it to their child's school. The following information should help to answer your questions about the new requirements:

New Tdap and Varicella Immunization Requirements for Students

Why are these requirements being made?

From 1986 through 2004, Wisconsin had the 5th highest rate of pertussis (whooping cough) 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 childhood DTP/DTPaP 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 can place a significant burden on children and parents as a person with pertussis must be isolated for a minimum of 5 days of antibiotic treatment.

Two doses of varicella vaccine have been shown to be more effective than one dose in preventing "breakthrough disease" cases of chickenpox in children of all age groups.

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

2. What are the new requirements, what grades are affected and when will they begin?

The Wisconsin Student Immunization Law will require:

- 1 dose of **tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis vaccine (Tdap)** for students entering **6th, 9th and 12th grades**, and
- 2 doses of **varicella (chickenpox) vaccine** for students entering **Kindergarten, 6th and 12th grades** beginning in the 2008-2009 school year (this coming fall).

3. What do parents need to do?

The Waterford Graded School District schools will be sending information to the homes of all incoming Kindergarteners and current 5th graders along with a new Student Immunization Record. (If you do not receive the mailing, the information and forms can be picked up at the school office.) Have your child vaccinated with Tdap and/or varicella vaccine(s) if he/she has not already received the vaccine(s). Write the date(s) of the immunization(s) in the bold outlined box(s) on the Student Immunization Record, sign it and return it to your child's school. To claim a waiver for health, religious or personal conviction reasons follow the instructions on the Student Immunization Record and return the signed form to your child's school.

Also, be sure to add the Tdap and/or varicella vaccine date(s) to the permanent immunization record you keep for your child at home. In the future, he/she may need to give these dates to other schools, colleges or employers.

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

Yes, there are two. The first is with the Tdap vaccine. If your child will be entering the 6th, 9th or 12th grade and already received a tetanus-containing vaccine (eg: Td vaccine) within the last 5 years, your child is compliant and Tdap vaccine is not required. Check the box marked "Td", enter the date it was received on the Student Immunization Record and return it to school. The second exception is to the varicella vaccine. If your child had chickenpox disease, 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 on the Student Immunization Record and return it to school.

5. If my child already had pertussis disease, should he/she still get the Tdap vaccine?

Children who have had pertussis disease should receive Tdap according to the routine recommendations because the length of protection provided by the disease is unknown and because the diagnosis can be difficult to confirm. This is not an exception to the Tdap requirement.

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

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