

Pertussis Boosters Now Required for All 7th – 12th Graders for School Entry What Physicians Need To Know

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

On September 29, 2010, Assembly Bill 354, a new law changing California immunization requirements for students entering 7th – 12th grades in public and private schools was passed. The law requires:

- This coming school year (2011 – 2012), all students entering 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, or 12th grades will need proof of an adolescent pertussis booster (Tdap) shot before starting school.
- For the next school year (2012-13) and future school years, only students entering into 7th grade will need proof of a Tdap dose to start school.



A dose of Td or DT vaccine does not satisfy this requirement.

Are all 7th – 12th grade students required to get a pertussis booster (Tdap) shot?

Yes. For the 2011 – 2012 school year, all students entering or advancing into 7th – 12th grades must have proof of having had the pertussis booster (Tdap) shot before starting school. This includes current students, new students and transfer students in both public and private schools. Students who are 18 years of age and older, while exempt, are strongly recommended to be vaccinated. Beginning in the 2012 – 2013 school year, the law will only affect 7th graders.

Why was the Tdap requirement added?

This new immunization requirement is intended to help reduce the spread of pertussis disease among California's youth. In recent years, California, as well as the rest of the United States, has seen an increase in the number of pertussis cases. In 2010, California experienced the most reported cases in over 60 years.

What if a student does not have proof of a pertussis booster (Tdap) shot before school starts?

School staff will exclude incoming 7th – 12th graders who do not have proof of receiving a pertussis booster (Tdap) shot. Schools will need to follow up on each student until the requirement is met.

What if a student has had pertussis?

The student will still need a pertussis booster (Tdap) shot to enter school. Immunity gained from the disease wears off, so students who have had pertussis can get it again.

What exemptions are available under California law?

California School Immunization Law allows (a) parents/guardians to elect a personal belief exemption from immunization requirements if the immunization is contrary to his/her personal beliefs, and (b) physicians to provide medical exemptions (with a written statement) if the immunization is not indicated for the student.

The law does not allow parents/guardians to elect an exemption simply out of convenience, such as when the immunization record is misplaced. Please educate parents about the risks of electing a non-medical exemption. Unimmunized students are at greater risk of catching dangerous diseases and place the entire school community at greater risk for an outbreak. Educational materials, including materials addressing common questions about vaccine safety can be found at www.eziz.org and www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip.

How can I help my patients meet the new pertussis booster requirement?

1. **Start Now.** Vaccinate your preteens and unvaccinated teens now, so that your practice can avoid “desperation” phone calls from parents/guardians during the weeks immediately prior to school entry.
2. **Make it routine.** Review the immunization records of all your 11 and 12 year old patients as they come in for acute care and preventive health visits. Provide a dose of Tdap (not Td) vaccine to those who have not yet received this booster vaccine. There is no need to wait a specific interval of time if they were recently vaccinated with Td as a booster. Use this visit as a chance to provide all vaccines that are due.
3. **Recall patients who are due for a pertussis booster (Tdap) shot.** Have your office staff systematically review the immunization records of your preteens and teens (i.e. age 11 years and older) for receipt of the Tdap vaccine and recall patients who have not received it. Providers who use the California Immunization Registry (CAIR) can use the system to assess their patients’ vaccination status. Contact the CAIR Help Desk at (213) 351-7411 if you use CAIR for assistance with this activity. You may also be able to use health plan, IPA, and EHR data to identify patients due for pertussis boosters.
4. **Document carefully.** Clearly document the dose of Tdap given to the child on a record that can be given to the parent/guardian or print out a record from CAIR so that the parent/guardian can provide proof of vaccination to school administration at the time of the child’s enrollment into the 7th – 12th grade. *Do not document the combination option “Td/Tdap”; the record must specifically read “Tdap”.*
5. **Help parents make an informed choice.** Educate parents about the risks of choosing to exempt their child from this requirement for non-medical reasons using materials posted at www.eziz.org.

Special Considerations

- Tdap vaccine (Adacel® or Boostrix®) given to children as young as 7 years of age meets the new school requirement if it was given as “catch-up” vaccination for an incomplete primary DTaP/DTP series, as recommended by the California and Los Angeles County Departments of Public Health during the statewide pertussis epidemic.
- Children who received the primary DTaP/DTP series when younger than 7 years of age and were vaccinated at 10 years of age with Boostrix® (licensed down to 10 years of age) meet the school requirement.



Resources for Parents & Providers

School Mandate Forms, Materials, and Clinician Webinar

- California Department of Public Health
www.shotsforschool.org/

Tdap Immunization Guidelines

- Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices
www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5503a1.htm?s_cid=rr5503a1_e

Immunization Educational Materials

- California Department of Public Health
www.eziz.org
- California Immunization Coalition
www.immunizeca.org
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip

Order sufficient vaccine for your adolescent patients and be sure that you have storage capacity for all doses ordered.

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