

School Entry Immunization Requirements for 7th & 12th Grade

Frequently Asked Questions

Q What shots are required to begin 7th and 12th grade in West Virginia?

A All incoming 7th grade and 12th grade students in West Virginia public and private schools must have proof that they have had age-appropriate Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis or whooping cough) and meningitis shots. These shots are not new and are recommended for these age groups by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health.

Q What if the incoming 7th or 12th grader is missing one or both shots?

A Many of the incoming 7th graders and 12th graders will have already had the shots needed for school. Some students will need both of these vaccinations and some will need just one.



A booster dose of the meningitis vaccine is required for 12th graders who had the first meningitis shot before their 16th birthday. Ask your doctor, health department or school nurse about the shots that your child needs for school.

Q What if my child received a dose of MCV4 vaccine just before the 16th birthday?

A If it was the 2nd dose of MCV4, even though it was administered before the 16th birthday, no further doses are recommended and thus no further doses required for 12th grade entry. If it was the 1st dose, then a 2nd dose of MCV4 is required for 12th grade entry. The 2nd dose should not be administered until a minimum of two months has lapsed since the first dose.

Q My child has always been in the WV school system, so wouldn't they be grandfathered in and not need the shots?

A A grandfather clause does not exist. The new school entry rule applies to all incoming 7th or 12th graders regardless of whether they are a transfer or a WV existing student. The requirements apply equally to all children entering the 7th or 12th grade, including children repeating the 7th grade or 12th grade in the 2012-13 school year.

Q What if I cannot afford the shot for my child, don't have insurance, or my insurance won't cover the cost of the vaccine, or my child's doctor doesn't offer these vaccines?

A If your child does not have health insurance, the child is eligible for the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. VFC-enrolled providers will administer vaccines free of charge to qualifying children. If your child's health insurance does not cover either of these vaccines, the child may be eligible for free vaccines at your local health department. Most health care providers with pediatric patients are in the VFC Program. This program provides vaccine for your child free of charge at any VFC provider including all of the local health departments. If your child's doctor does not offer the vaccines, ask the doctor to provide a Physician Referral for vaccination to take with you to the local health department.

Q What if I don't get my 7th or 12th grader vaccinated before school begins?

A A child that has not received the Tdap and Meningitis shots will not be eligible to begin school. The only exception is medical exemption from the shot.

Q Are the Tdap and Meningitis shots safe?

A All injections have a risk and sometimes side effects are felt. The most common side effect is soreness at the injection site or swelling. However, the risk of getting and spreading the disease is much greater. To learn more about vaccine safety go to www.immunization.wv.gov.

Q What happens if my child is 19 years old and uninsured, will the health department be able to provide free vaccine?

A Yes.

Q If a student is pregnant, will she be exempted from these requirements?

A A pregnant student may be temporarily exempted from both vaccines but for different periods of time. A student's health care provider may submit a temporary medical exemption request for the entire term of pregnancy for MCV4. For Tdap, the health care provider may request a temporary exemption to last through 20 weeks of the pregnancy. It is critically important for the health of a newborn baby for the mother (and all other household contacts) to be vaccinated against pertussis through receipt of one dose of Tdap vaccine, either before pregnancy or after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

Q My child mistakenly received a dose of DTaP instead of Tdap as the booster dose from our physician. Will that shot count?

A Yes. Although DTaP is the formulation administered to younger children (< 7 years of age) as part of a separate multi-dose series, whenever DTaP is inadvertently administered to an older child or adult it is not recommended to be repeated with a dose of Tdap. In these rare situations, the incorrect dose of DTaP suffices for meeting the requirement of Tdap for 7th/12th grade school entry.

Q My child attends school in West Virginia but our doctor is in a bordering state. Is there anything I can give them to make them aware of these changes?

A You may share the guidelines and other information found at www.immunization.wv.gov or refer the doctor to the West Virginia Division of Immunization Services at 304-558-2188. You may also need to inform the doctor that these are legal requirements for school attendance in West Virginia and there is no opt-out except for medical contraindications.

Q How can I find out if my child has already had these vaccinations?

A If your child does not have a doctor or you are unable to find out from the doctor, you may ask your local health department to search the West Virginia immunization registry known as the West Virginia Statewide Immunization Information System (WVSIIIS).