

Dear Parents or Guardians,

Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, is a bacterial infection that can easily spread causing severe coughing fits and missed days of school.

Meningococcal disease is a serious bacterial illness that affects the brain and the spinal cord. Meningitis can cause shock, coma, and death within hours of the first symptoms.

To help protect your children and others from whooping cough and meningitis, Georgia law requires students be vaccinated against both diseases unless the child has an exemption.

Before starting the school year, all students born on or after January 1, 2002 and entering or transferring into 7th grade will need proof of a whooping cough booster shot and a meningococcal shot.

If your preteen has not been vaccinated against whooping cough or meningococcal disease, we strongly recommend getting your child vaccinated. Getting Tdap (the tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis shot) and MCV4 (meningococcal conjugate vaccine) now will not only help protect your child against the ongoing threat of whooping cough and meningitis but will also meet the school entry requirement.

Ask your pediatrician or local health department about other shots your child may need including:

- the human papillomavirus (HPV) 3-shot series
- an annual flu vaccine; and
- catch-up immunizations, including chickenpox, MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) and hepatitis B.

Proof of both vaccinations must be documented on the Georgia Immunization Certificate (Form 3231)

If your child does not have health insurance or their health plan won't cover these vaccines, call your local health department and ask about getting no or low cost vaccines. For more information, visit <http://dph.georgia.gov/vaccines-children> or call (800)-848-3868.

