



Illinois State Board of Education

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NEWS

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State education and health agencies issue reminder for immunizations as students prepare for new school year

August marks National Immunization Awareness Month

SPRINGFIELD — As students are preparing to head back to school, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) encourage parents and guardians to ensure their children's immunizations are up to date. There is a new school-entrance immunization requirement for the upcoming school year.

Beginning this fall, a meningococcal conjugate vaccination (MCV4) requirement becomes effective for students entering grades six or 12. Sixth-graders must show proof of one dose of MCV4; 12th-graders must show proof of having received two doses. Twelfth-graders who received the first dose after 16 years of age need only one dose.

In addition, any child entering kindergarten, sixth grade or ninth grade for the first time shall show proof of having received two doses of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine. IDPH's [Immunization Quick Reference Guide](#) provides additional details about the 2015-16 requirements.

"Immunizations are in place to protect students and their families," said State Superintendent of Education Tony Smith, Ph.D. "It's important that our students stay healthy so they can remain in the classroom, continuing to learn and grow throughout the year."

The State of Illinois requires vaccinations to protect children from a variety of diseases before they can enter school. For school entrance, students must show proof of diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, haemophilus influenza type b, hepatitis b, and varicella, as well as pneumococcal and now meningococcal (depending on age) vaccinations. For more information about immunizations, including [vaccination schedules](#), visit <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/prevention-wellness/immunization>.

"Although we are seeing fewer cases of many vaccine-preventable diseases, if we don't continue to vaccinate our children, we will see an uptick and more people become infected. We could experience another outbreak similar to the measles outbreak which

occurred in Illinois earlier this year," said IDPH Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. "Vaccines have been proven to be a safe and effective way to keep children protected against a number of diseases."

August marks [National Immunization Awareness Month](#), which aims to educate people of all ages about the importance of protecting their health by being immunized against infectious diseases.

In addition to immunizations, all students enrolling in kindergarten -- in a public or private school -- and any student enrolling for the first time in Illinois (with the exception of preschoolers) must also have an eye examination. The eye exam needs to be performed by a licensed optometrist or medical doctor who performs eye exams and is licensed by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation. All eye exams must be completed within one year prior to Oct. 15.

Furthermore, all students enrolled in kindergarten, the second, and the sixth grades are required to have a dental examination.

Also, all children must complete a physical examination prior to entering Illinois schools for the first time, prior to the date of entering kindergarten or first grade, prior to entering sixth grade, and prior to entering ninth grade. The exam includes gender and date of birth; an evaluation of height, weight, BMI, blood pressure, skin, eyes, ears, nose, throat, mouth/dental; cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, genitourinary, neurological, and musculoskeletal evaluations; spinal examination; evaluation of nutritional status; lead screening; and other evaluations deemed necessary by the health care provider. Illinois' health exam requirements are aligned with recommendations by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) on adolescent vaccinations.

These student health requirements for entry apply to all schools in Illinois - public, charter, or private. Parents and guardians should contact their health care provider, local health department, or pharmacy to schedule an appointment to receive the recommended and required vaccinations. It is important to keep an immunization record card for your child's entry into school.

IDPH offers additional immunization information on its [website](#). There is also the Illinois Help Me Grow helpline at 1-800-323-GROW (voice and TTY) for additional immunization information. For parents who may not be able to afford immunizations, the Vaccines for Children program provides vaccines at no cost to children from low-income families. For information, call (312) 746-6050 in Chicago or (217) 785-1455 for the rest of the state.

For additional information about immunizations in Illinois, visit:

- **ISBE's School Health Issues:** http://www.isbe.net/school_health.htm#immu
- **Administrative Rules for Basic Immunizations:** <http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/077/077006650B02400R.html>

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