

# School Immunization Exemptions

Under California law, students who are entering child care or kindergarten or advancing to the 7th grade are required to submit proof that they have received vaccines. School immunization requirements protect children from vaccine-preventable diseases like measles, mumps, and pertussis (whooping cough), and also prevent the spread of diseases to schoolmates, teachers, staff, family members, and community members.



## 1. Which immunizations are required for school entry?

You can find a list of required vaccines at [www.shotsforschool.org](http://www.shotsforschool.org) or speak to your health care provider.

## 2. Who decides which vaccines my child needs for school entry?

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), a group of vaccine and public health experts, uses scientific facts to recommend which vaccines children should receive to prevent diseases.

Many of the ACIP recommended vaccines are required for child care and school entry. Elected officials work with medical and public health experts to decide on necessary vaccines. Required vaccines are listed in the California Health and Safety Code (Division 105, Part 2, Chapter 1, Sections 120325-120380). To learn more, visit [www.shotsforschool.org/laws/](http://www.shotsforschool.org/laws/).

## 3. What exemptions are allowed?

Children may be exempt from school immunization requirements if:

- They have a medical condition that rules out one or more vaccines.
- Immunization is against their parent or guardian’s religious or personal beliefs.

## 4. What are the risks of exemption?

Skipping or delaying vaccines puts children at risk for diseases. Studies show that children with immunization exemptions are at a higher risk for vaccine-preventable diseases than children who have been vaccinated. To learn more, visit:

[www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/Documents/Vaccineschedule.pdf](http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/Documents/Vaccineschedule.pdf).

## 5. Are vaccines safe and effective?

Yes. The United States has the safest and most effective vaccine supply in history. The Food and Drug Administration reviews years of evidence to make sure vaccines are safe and effective before they’re licensed. After the licensing process, vaccine safety is continually monitored.

Vaccines can occasionally cause side effects or reactions like any medicine; however, most vaccine side effects are minor and temporary like a sore arm or fever. Your child is in much more danger from the disease than from the vaccine.

To learn more about vaccine safety, visit the California Immunization Coalition’s “Why I Choose” website at [www.whyichoose.org/vaccinesafety.html](http://www.whyichoose.org/vaccinesafety.html).

## Key Facts

- School immunization requirements protect students from serious diseases and prevent outbreaks.
- Skipping or delaying vaccines puts children at risk.
- In an outbreak, unimmunized children may be kept out of child care or school for days or weeks. This helps reduce their chance of infection and the spread of illness.
- California law allows for exemptions to school immunization requirements for children if:
  - They have a medical reason that rules out vaccines
  - Their parent or guardian has personal or religious beliefs against immunizations.

## Resources

- School immunization requirements: [www.shotsforschool.org](http://www.shotsforschool.org)
- Vaccine safety resources: [www.ph.lacounty.gov/ip/provide rs/VaccineSafety.htm](http://www.ph.lacounty.gov/ip/provide rs/VaccineSafety.htm)
- Stories of families impacted by vaccine-preventable diseases: [www.shotbyshot.org](http://www.shotbyshot.org)

### 6. If my child has an exemption, will he/she be allowed into school?

Students with an approved exemption on file may attend child care or school. However, children with exemptions may be required to stay home if:

- They are infected with a vaccine-preventable disease.
- They have had contact with a student who has a vaccine-preventable disease in a child care center or school.

To prevent others from getting sick and to help reduce the spread of illness, a health care provider will need to verify that the child may return to school.

### 7. When can my child go back to school?

Children who have been kept out of school or child care (excluded) because they have a vaccine-preventable disease will need to stay home until they are no longer at risk for spreading the disease.

If your child was in contact with a student who has a vaccine-preventable disease, the Los Angeles County Health Officer may legally order the child care center or school to keep your child home for 21 days or more. Your child care center or school will work with you to arrange for your child's return.

- If your child receives a vaccine, he/she may be allowed to return to child care or school sooner. The vaccine may offer protection against the disease.
- If your child was in contact with someone who has pertussis (whooping cough), he/she may be able to return to school after completing approved antibiotics. Antibiotics can prevent unvaccinated children who are exposed to pertussis from developing and spreading the disease.

### 8. What about my child's studies?

Call your local school district office or the California Department of Education to find out about alternate methods of education if your child has been temporarily excluded because of a disease outbreak. Many school districts provide Home and Hospital Care Instruction or Independent Study. For more information, visit [www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/hh/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/hh/) and [www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/is/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/is/).

### 9. How do I file an exemption?

Submit a written statement from your child's doctor to the child care center or school if your child has a medical condition that rules out one or more vaccines.

If you want to exempt your child from school immunization requirements because of your personal beliefs, you must:

- Talk to an approved health care provider about the benefits and risks of immunizations and the risks of the diseases that immunizations can prevent.
- Submit the California Department of Public Health's "Personal Beliefs Exemption to Required Immunizations Form" (PBE Form) to the child care center or school. You and an approved health care provider must sign and date the form.
- Show the child care center or school a valid record that shows any required vaccines your child has received.

By speaking with a health care provider, you will have a chance to learn more about immunizations, have your questions answered, and make an informed decision.

If your religious beliefs do not allow you to receive medical advice or treatment from a health care provider, you are not required to talk to an approved health care provider. You must check the religious exemption box on the PBE Form and submit the form to the child care center or school.

### 10. If I decide to have my child vaccinated, where can we get vaccines?

Make an appointment with your child's health care provider for immunizations. Most insurance plans cover immunizations at no-cost to the patient. If your child does not have health insurance coverage for vaccines, you may call the LA County Information Line at 2-1-1 from any phone within the county or visit [www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip) to find a provider who offers vaccines at no-charge or at a reduced-charge.