

School Immunization Exemptions

Under California law, students who are entering childcare or school 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). They also prevent the spread of diseases to schoolmates, teachers, staff, family, and community members.

1. Which immunizations are required for school entry?

You can find a list of required vaccines at www.shotsforschool.org or speak to your health care provider.

2. What exemptions are allowed?

Children don't need to meet school immunization requirements if:

- They have a medical exemption that rules out one or more vaccines from a licensed physician (MD or DO).
- They have a valid personal belief exemption (PBE) filed before January 1, 2016. The exemption will remain valid until the child enters transitional kindergarten/kindergarten or 7th grade.

3. How do I file for a medical exemption?

Submit a letter from your child's doctor to the childcare center or school stating he or she has a physical condition or medical circumstance that rules out one or more vaccines. The letter should also include which vaccine(s) are being exempted and whether the exemption is permanent or temporary. An expiration date is required if the exemption is temporary.

4. What are the risks of exemption?

Skipping or delaying vaccines puts children at risk for diseases. Studies show that children with exemptions are at higher risk for vaccine-preventable diseases than children who were vaccinated.

5. Can my child go to school without required immunizations?

In some cases, a child who hasn't received one or more of the required immunizations, may be temporarily admitted to child care or school while they catch up on their immunizations. If a child hasn't received any dose of a required vaccine, they must receive a first dose before being admitted.



Key Facts

- School immunization requirements protect students from serious diseases and prevent outbreaks.
- In an outbreak, unimmunized children may be kept out of childcare or school for days or weeks. This helps lower their chance for infection and the spread of illness.
- California law allows for exemptions to school immunization requirements for children.

For more information:

- School immunization requirements: www.shotsforschool.org
- Vaccine safety resources: www.ph.lacounty.gov/ip/providers/VaccineSafety.htm
- Stories of families impacted by Vaccine-preventable diseases: www.shotbyshot.org

6. If my child has an exemption, will they be allowed into school?

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

- They are infected with a vaccine-preventable disease
- They've had contact with a student who has a vaccine-preventable disease in a childcare center or school

7. When can my child go back to school?

Children who are kept home or excluded from school or childcare center 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 Health Officer may legally require that the child be kept home for 21 days or more. Your child care center or school will work with you to arrange for your child's return.

- If you choose to have your child vaccinated, they may be allowed to return to childcare or school sooner.
- If your child was in contact with someone who has pertussis (whooping cough), they may be able to return to school after completing antibiotics. Antibiotics can prevent unvaccinated children who are exposed to pertussis from developing and spreading the disease.

8. Are vaccines safe and effective?

Yes. Like other medicines, vaccines can sometimes cause side effects or reactions. 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.

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

Make an appointment with your child's health care provider. 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.

Visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip to find a provider who offers vaccines at no charge or at a lower charge.