

What is the whooping cough (pertussis) booster requirement?

- All students entering, advancing or transferring into 7th grade need proof of an adolescent whooping cough booster immunization (called "Tdap").

Do ALL 7th grade students need to get the whooping cough immunization? Yes. Unless they have an exemption, all students going into 7th grade must have proof of having had the Tdap booster shot. This includes current students, new students and transfer students in both public and private schools. Many students have already received the vaccine and simply need to supply proof to the school, so check with your doctor or provider.

Why is the Tdap vaccine required? This requirement will help protect your child and others in your school and community from whooping cough. Whooping cough is a serious disease that causes coughing fits that can last for months. In recent years, whooping cough has been increasing in the United States. Whooping cough has been widespread in California and was responsible for 10 infant deaths in 2010.

Why should my child get vaccinated with Tdap? In addition to it being a requirement for school, children who get a Tdap booster shot will be better protected during their school years. Immunization also helps to protect others within the home, in the community, and at school. Immunizations help prevent school closures. Many schools in California have suffered from outbreaks of whooping cough. Students got very sick and parents missed work and lost wages to care for their sick children. In some cases, schools had to close, because there were not enough healthy teachers to keep schools open.

When should my child get vaccinated with Tdap? Now. Unimmunized children are at risk for catching whooping cough, getting really sick and missing weeks of school. Besides protecting your child, you can also beat the back-to-school rush by making an appointment for your incoming 7th grader to get a Tdap booster shot now. Keep documentation of your child's Tdap booster shot in a safe place. Your child will need proof of immunization for school. Check with your school about how and when to submit the documentation.

What if my child had whooping cough recently or in the past? Any protection (immunity) developed after having whooping cough disease wears off, leaving your child at risk for getting whooping cough again. A whooping cough booster shot is needed to both protect your child in the future and to meet the school requirement. A Tdap dose administered on or after the 7th birthday will meet the requirement.

Instead of getting a Tdap booster to meet the requirement, can a student get a blood test to check for protection (immunity) against whooping cough? No. Testing for immunity to whooping cough is not reliable and will not meet the school requirement.

What if my child does not have proof of a Tdap shot before school starts? Your child will not be able to start school until you submit the documentation for the Tdap requirement to the school.

Is there a grace period/extension to get the shot AFTER school starts? No. As of now, there is no grace period or extension. Under current law, schools do not have the option to provide a grace period. All 7th grade students need to show proof of Tdap immunization or submit an exemption before starting school.

How long do you have to wait after your last tetanus shot before getting Tdap? According to state and national recommendations, the dose of Tdap required for the school law may be given at any time after the last tetanus shot.

Diseases and Vaccines

What is Tdap and what are the diseases that the Tdap vaccine prevents? Tdap is a booster vaccine for older children, adolescents, and adults. It safely protects against 3 dangerous diseases: tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough (also called pertussis).

- **Pertussis** – also known as whooping cough, is a contagious disease that causes violent coughing fits that make it hard to breathe. It spreads easily when someone with the disease coughs or sneezes. The symptoms can last for months. Whooping cough is particularly dangerous for young babies.

- **Tetanus** – causes a severe, painful tightening (spasms) of muscles, including of the jaw ('lockjaw'), which can limit swallowing and breathing.
- **Diphtheria** – is a throat infection that can lead to breathing problems, paralysis, heart failure and death.

Should parents and others at home get the Tdap vaccine? The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) recommends that parents and other adults and adolescents at home get vaccinated with Tdap now if they haven't done so already. Immunization also helps to protect close contacts, including young infants for whom whooping cough is most severe and sometimes fatal.

How soon does the Tdap vaccine work? Typically 1-2 weeks after the injection.

What other immunizations should I consider for my child? In addition to routine baby shots, preteens and teens also need the following vaccines:

- Tdap to protect against whooping cough, tetanus, and diphtheria
- One dose against meningococcal disease (brain or blood infection) at age 11 or 12 and a booster dose at age 16 years
- Yearly immunization against flu (influenza)
- The human papillomavirus (HPV) 3 shot series

Make sure your children are also up-to-date on their childhood immunizations including two doses against chickenpox (if they have never had chickenpox disease) and two doses of immunization against measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR). Talk with your healthcare provider for more information and the [recommended vaccine schedule](#).

Where can my child get vaccinated? Children should visit their regular doctor or health care provider to get their Tdap shot and other immunizations as soon as possible to avoid the back-to-school rush. The Vaccines for Children Program (VFC) offers free or low cost vaccines for eligible patients 18 years and younger. If your child is eligible for Medi-Cal, you can find a VFC provider [near you](#). If your child's health plan does not cover immunizations, visit a [federally qualified health center](#) in your area. Some [local health departments](#) also offer free or low cost immunizations to children with no health insurance. Some [pharmacies](#) may also offer the Tdap vaccine and other immunizations. For more information, please contact your [local health department](#).