



FAQ: Tdap (Whooping Cough) Booster Immunization Requirement

● What is the new Tdap requirement (known as AB 354)?

All students entering, advancing, transferring into 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th or 12th grades will need proof of an adolescent whooping cough (pertussis) booster immunization (called “Tdap”) before entry into school this August.

● Why was the Tdap requirement added?

The new immunization requirement is intended to reduce the spread of whooping cough in California. In recent years the United States has seen an increase in whooping cough. In 2010, California had the most cases of whooping cough reported in over 60 years.

Prior to entering kindergarten, most children are fully protected against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis after receiving the DTaP vaccine in early childhood. However, immunity to these diseases wears off, leaving adolescents vulnerable once again. A booster dose of Tdap during adolescence helps to protect students and their close contacts, including young infants for whom pertussis is most severe and sometimes fatal.

● Who is affected by the Tdap requirement?

All public and private schools are affected by the law.

● What exemptions are available under California law?

California law does not allow students to receive exemptions simply because of convenience, such as when the immunization record is misplaced or time is running out to meet the requirement.

California law describes two exemptions for student immunization requirements. (Schools should maintain an up-to-date list of students with exemptions, so those students can be excluded quickly if an outbreak occurs.)

- **Personal beliefs exemptions:** You may request an exemption for children from immunization requirements if the immunization is contrary to your personal beliefs. The parent or guardian requesting an exemption needs to sign the affidavit in the presence of school staff for verification; the form cannot be brought home by the student or mailed home for signing.
- **Medical exemptions:** Physicians may grant in writing an exemption for students for whom immunizations are not medically indicated, which occurs infrequently.

● When should children get vaccinated with Tdap?

Now. Avoid the rush and make sure your children can start school on time. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment for their incoming 7th – 12th grader to get a Tdap booster shot now. Children as young as 10 years old are recommended to get vaccinated with Tdap. This will protect them against the ongoing threat of whooping cough and will meet the Tdap school requirement for when they are in 7th grade. Keep documentation of the child’s Tdap booster shot in a safe place. Children will need proof of immunization in order to start school.