

Do you have a child about to enter the 6th grade?



If so, you need to know about an immunization requirement for 6th grade entry.

Q. What is the immunization requirement?

A. A booster dose of Tdap vaccine is required for all children attending public school who are entering the 6th grade on or after August 1, 2008, if five years or more have passed since their last dose of tetanus/diphtheria toxoid.

Students not attending public school, (i.e., private, home-school, non-traditional schools) who are 12 years of age on or after August 1, 2008, are required to receive one booster dose of Tdap vaccine, if five years or more have passed since their last dose of tetanus/diphtheria toxoid.

Q. What is Tdap?

A. Tdap is a combination of three vaccines that provides protection against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough).

Q. Why does my child need this vaccine?

A. In 2006, over 15,000 cases of whooping cough were reported in the United States. The majority of these cases occurred in individuals between 10-29 years of age.

There has been an increase in whooping cough in the U.S. in recent years. Most children are fully protected against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis prior to entering kindergarten because of the

DTaP vaccine. However, protection against these diseases decreases after about 10 years. By giving adolescents a booster dose of Tdap, they will receive protection against these deadly diseases for the years to come.

Q. When did this law go into effect?

A. The law went into effect January 1, 2008 and impacts all students entering 6th grade on or after the 2008-09 school year.

Q. Is the vaccine safe and effective?

A. Yes. The most common side effects are pain and swelling at the site of injection. While the vaccine does not cause serious side effects, some people feel tired or experience headaches. Tdap has been shown to decrease the incidence of pertussis by 90 percent.

Q. Where can I get this vaccine/ How much will it cost?

A. You can get this vaccine at your doctor's office or local health department. If your child is insured, the insurance may cover the costs of the vaccine. If your child is 18 years of age or younger, and meets one of the following qualifications, he or she is eligible to receive the vaccine from the state at no cost:

- ▶ Is eligible for Medicaid,
- ▶ Has no health insurance,
- ▶ Is Native American or Alaskan Native, or
- ▶ Has health insurance, but it does not cover the cost of vaccine.

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Q. If my child got a vaccine called Td does he/she still need the Tdap vaccine?

A. Maybe. Td is the vaccine to prevent tetanus and diphtheria. Tdap provides additional protection against pertussis (commonly called whooping cough). If it has been more than five years since your child received a dose of tetanus-containing vaccine, they will need a dose of Tdap.

However, if it has been less than five years since your child received a dose of tetanus-containing vaccine, he or she is not required by law to have a booster dose of Tdap to enter the 6th grade. Consider talking to your child's doctor about whether your child would benefit from receiving a dose of Tdap at this time.

Q. What should I do next?

A. Contact your child's health care provider or local health department to schedule an appointment to receive a dose of Tdap if your child has not received Td or Tdap within the past five years. Your child needs to receive this vaccine and show proof of vaccination prior to entering the 6th grade.

Be sure that the doctor provides a Certificate of Immunization that documents the dose of tetanus-containing vaccine received and the date.

Q. How do I show proof of vaccination?

A. A physician, health clinic or local health department must give a **Certificate of Immunization** to the person who brings the child for immunization. You must give a copy of this Certificate of Immunization to your child's school to show proof of vaccination for Tdap.

Q. Are there any other shots my child should get?

A. Yes, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following vaccines for this age group:

- ▶ Meningococcal,
- ▶ Hepatitis A,
- ▶ Human Papillomavirus (HPV)
- ▶ Flu, and
- ▶ A second dose of Varicella (chickenpox).

These vaccines are not required by law, but are strongly recommended for adolescents. For more information about these vaccines, talk to your doctor.

Q. What if my child is uninsured? How can I get help paying for vaccine administration fees and other health care services my child needs?

A. Your child may be eligible for Health Check/Medicaid or NC Health Choice – free or low-cost health insurance for children and teens under 19 years old (up to 21 in some cases). Both Health Check and NC Health Choice offer a rich package of benefits. If you are uninsured, apply through your local department of social services to find out if you qualify. To learn more about these child health insurance programs, go to www.NCHealthyStart.org.

Q. How can I learn more?

A. Talk to your school's nurse, your health care provider, or your local health department. You can also call the NC Immunization Branch at **(919) 707-5550** or go online at www.immunize.nc.gov for more information.