



STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM
CORDELL HULL BUILDING, 4TH FLOOR
425 - 5TH AVENUE NORTH
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37247-4911

To: Jan Bushing, Tennessee Department of Education
From: Kelly L. Moore, MD, MPH, Medical Director, Tennessee Immunization Program
RE: Immunization Requirements for School Entry as of January 1, 2006

This memo summarizes the vaccinations required for day care through grade twelve in Tennessee. These requirements are created by the Commissioner of Health and listed under state Rules and Regulations 1200-14-1-.29, available at <http://www.state.tn.us/sos/rules/1200/1200-14/1200-14-01.pdf>. Each school is responsible for enforcing these requirements.

General requirements:

To enter any nursery school, day care center, Head Start center, pre-school or grades kindergarten (“K”) through twelve of any public, private, or church related school, children must show proof of adequate (i.e., age-appropriate) immunization against seven diseases:

- Diphtheria, pertussis (“whooping cough”), tetanus (the DTaP shot)
- Polio (the IPV shot)
- Measles, rubella, mumps (the MMR shot). *Note:* Before entry into grades K-12, two MMR doses are required, with the first dose given on or after the first birthday. Because MMR is less likely to protect the child if given before the first birthday, the first dose must be given no more than 4 days before the first birthday. Doses given earlier must be repeated to comply with the school entry requirement.

Limited requirements:

- Immunization against hepatitis B is required only before entry into kindergarten or seventh grade. There is no hepatitis B immunization requirement for entry into other grades.
- Immunization against or history of varicella disease (chickenpox) is required only before entry into kindergarten or licensed child care facilities. This is not required for entry into other grades.
- The Department of Human Services (DHS) requires that children in DHS-licensed day care facilities be age-appropriately immunized against hemophilus influenza type B (“HiB meningitis”) in state regulation 1240-4-1-.06. This is not required for school entry.

Exemptions:

- Religious: In the absence of an epidemic or immediate threat of an epidemic, a religious exemption to immunization requirements is allowed by state law (TCA 49-6-5001). By law, the parent or guardian must provide to the school a signed, written statement that such immunization conflicts with their religious tenets and practices, affirmed under the penalties of perjury.
- Medical: Any immunization shall not be required if a qualified physician certifies in a written statement that the immunization would be in any manner harmful to the child. An explanation of the medical reason for exemption is not required.

Recommended (not required) vaccines:

- Several vaccines against serious childhood diseases are recommended for all children, but are not required for school attendance. These include vaccines against pneumococcal disease, hepatitis A, influenza, and, beginning at age 11, meningococcal disease. All children should be age-appropriately immunized with all recommended vaccines to prevent these serious childhood infections.