



Arkansas Rules and Regulations Pertaining to Immunization Requirements Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is there a grace period for students to get their immunizations up to date?

A school may temporarily admit a child if that the child is in-process of receiving the needed doses of vaccine, or shows proof that they have applied for an exemption for those vaccines he/she has not received, within thirty (30) calendar days after the child's original admission or by October 1st for Tdap at age 11 years and Meningococcal vaccines at age 16 years. A written statement from a public health nurse or private physician stating that the student is in process and containing a date when the student must return for the next immunization shall be in the student's file. Schools may choose to have a stricter policy and not temporarily admit a child until they have met all of the immunization requirements.

2. How should new students with no shot records be handled?

New students who arrive at school without any shot records should be handled in the same way as other students who did not have documentation for the required shots. This includes students from out of state and from other countries. If the school allows, they can be temporarily admitted and given thirty (30) calendar days after the child's original admission (or until October 1st for Tdap at age 11 years and Meningococcal vaccines at age 16 years) to provide the documentation that they have received the required immunizations, are in-process of receiving needed doses, or have applied for an exemption for those vaccines he/she has not received in order to continue attendance in a public or private school.

3. What is the difference between DTaP and Tdap?

Both of these vaccines protect against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis. "D" or "d" is for diphtheria, "T" is for tetanus, and "aP" or "ap" is for acellular pertussis, which distinguishes it from the older vaccines labeled with only "P", which stood for whole-cell pertussis. The difference in the two current vaccines is in how much antigen for each bacterium is contained in each dose. If the letter is uppercase, it means that the amount of antigen is greater. The DTaP vaccine is for infants and younger children. The Tdap vaccine is for older children and adults. The reason for the difference is because as children get older and their immune systems mature, they need less antigen to obtain the desired response to the vaccine.

4. Who can provide the medical history of chickenpox?

A history of disease may be accepted in lieu of receiving Varicella vaccine. The new requirements allow only a history of varicella from a medical professional to be accepted. A medical professional may be a medical doctor (MD), an advanced practice nurse (APN), a doctor of osteopathy (DO), or a physician assistant (PA). No self or parental history of varicella disease will be accepted. Documentation found in WebIZ for a history of varicella disease is usually from a parental history of disease, and therefore it will not be accepted as proof of history of disease.

5. What are the differences between the ACIP recommendations for the Meningococcal (MCV4) vaccine and the Arkansas Immunization Requirements?

The CDC Advisory Committee on Immunizations Practices (ACIP) recommends two doses of the MCV4 vaccine for children. The first at age 11-12 years, and the second at age 16 years. If the first dose is administered at age 13 through 15 years, a booster dose should be administered at age 16 through 18 years with a minimum interval of at least 8 weeks between doses. If the first dose is administered at age 16 years or older, a booster dose is not needed.

The Arkansas requirements are as follows:

Grade 7: Students entering the 7th grade must have one dose of MCV4 vaccine. This requirement is for 7th grade only. There is no other MCV4 immunization requirement for students based on their grade.

16-Year Olds: For students who turn 16 on or before September 1 of each school year, regardless of grade, if a student has had one (1) dose of MCV4 in the past, a second dose is required, if it has been eight weeks since the first dose. If no previous dose was received, the student needs one (1) dose and no second dose is required. To meet this requirement for 16-year olds, **a student must receive a MCV4 dose on or after their 16th birthday**. A dose given at age 15 years will not meet this requirement.

Please note: Students age 17 years or older have no MCV4 requirement for school attendance. In other words, no catch-up vaccination is required.

6. Which schedule do I go by? The ACIP-recommended immunizations or the Rules and Regs for the required immunizations?

The ACIP-recommended immunizations are the standard of preventive care that we want to promote in Arkansas for all immunization providers. The Arkansas Rules and Regulations were written so that children who receive all of the ACIP-recommended immunizations will meet the immunization requirements for school attendance. However, if children receive only the required immunizations, they will fall below the standard of preventive care that we would like to achieve in Arkansas. When children present to Health Department local health units for immunizations, ADH staff must go by ADH policy (which follows ACIP recommendations).