



Information Regarding Temporary Exemption – Preservative Free Influenza Vaccine

There are currently limited supplies of thimerosal-free influenza vaccine that can be administered to children ages 6-35 months, under California law ([California Health and Safety Code Section 124172](#)).

Because of the dangers posed by the seasonal influenza every year and because there are currently insufficient supplies of thimerosal-free (preservative-free) influenza vaccine, the California Department of Public Health has authorized a temporary exemption from California Health and Safety code Section 124172 subdivision (a) for the 2015-2016 season for the period of October 9, 2015 to December 31, 2015 ([see attached notice](#)).

What you should know:

- This waiver allows healthcare providers in California to offer influenza vaccine with preservatives to children between 6 months and 36 months of age.
- Only five other states have similar limitations on the use of influenza vaccines containing thimerosal, Delaware, Illinois, Missouri, New York and Washington. All other states are allowed to use whichever influenza vaccine formulation is available and recommended for patient's age and preference.
- This temporary waiver will significantly reduce missed opportunities for flu vaccination.
- This exemption only applies to children under 3 years of age; pregnancy still requires the use of preservative free vaccine (those supplies are not limited at this time).
- There is no proven risk from thimerosal-containing vaccine and the substantial risk of complications or death from influenza disease in these groups far outweighs the risk of vaccination (see resources below).
- As with any routine vaccine, providers should continue to provide patients and parents or guardians with the specific Vaccine Information Statement (VIS) that lists risks and benefits before immunization

Resources

- Text of California law: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Pages/CaliforniaThimerosalLaw.aspx>
- Understanding Thimerosal, Mercury, and Vaccine Safety <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/patient-ed/conversations/downloads/vacsafe-thimerosal-color-office.pdf>
- Vaccine Ingredients – Thimerosal <http://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-ingredients/thimerosal#.VhQX-uxVhBd>
- Thimerosal in Vaccines Questions and Answers <http://www.fda.gov/BiologicsBloodVaccines/Vaccines/QuestionsaboutVaccines/UCM070430>

For more information, please contact the California Department of Public Health Immunization Branch at (510) 620-3737 or www.getimmunizedca.org

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