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May 11, 2021

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Pediatricians and Public Health Officials Urge Families to Catch Up on Vaccinations

Immunizations are one of the most important things parents can do to keep their kids healthy as they go back to school and enroll in summer activities

SACRAMENTO, CA – As in-person instruction resumes in the state, the California Immunization Coalition (CIC) urges parents and guardians to ensure students are up-to-date on their childhood vaccinations. This follows [a recent statement](#) from the California Department of Public Health’s Immunization Branch asking for pediatric patients to catch up on their immunization schedules as schools and summer programs reopen.

“Medical offices are open and ready to safely care for you and your children. We want to make sure all parents and others who care for children are aware that they need to act now to make sure their student is up to date on required and recommended vaccinations,” said Catherine Flores Martin, CIC executive director. “Waiting to schedule vaccination appointments may lead to backlogs at doctor’s offices, delays in confirming enrollment, and worse – children being left unprotected from serious diseases.”

California law requires that students K-12 be current on their vaccines as a condition of enrollment. Data from the [California Immunization Registry](#) (CAIR2) shows a troubling decrease in vaccination rates, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and missed well-child visits. During 2020, as compared with 2019, an estimated 12% fewer children under the age of 3 years received their first measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine, 19% fewer children aged 4-6 years received their second MMR vaccine, and 20% fewer adolescents aged 11-13 years old received their Tdap booster.

Health care providers and California health officials are concerned that the state could face outbreaks of diseases such as measles, pertussis, and meningitis if children and adolescents are not protected through recommended and required immunizations. Health care providers are also reminding parents that vaccines are most effective in preventing disease when they are given in a timely manner, according to [vaccination schedules](#) as determined by the federal [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#).

“While vaccinations are required for school enrollment, we vaccinate children and adolescents based on scientific guidelines and timelines in order to protect their health – not just because they are required by state law,” says Randy Bergen, MD, Pediatrician and President of the CIC. “We saw lower rates of diseases in the community last year because children were not together in school, so we need to ensure they are up to date on their vaccines. The last thing we need as kids are finally back in the classroom is to have them sidelined again by outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases.”

California students admitted at TK/K-12 need¹:

- Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis (DTaP, DTP, Tdap, or Td) — 5 doses (4 doses OK if one was given on or after 4th birthday. 3 doses OK if one was given on or after 7th birthday.) For 7th-12th graders, at least 1 dose of pertussis-containing vaccine is required on or after 7th birthday.
- Polio (OPV or IPV) — 4 doses (3 doses OK if one was given on or after 4th birthday)
- Hepatitis B — 3 doses (not required for 7th grade entry)
- Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) — 2 doses (Both given on or after 1st birthday)
- Varicella (Chickenpox) — 2 doses

In addition, the University of California and California State University recently [announced](#) that they will require COVID-19 vaccinations for all students, faculty, and staff on campus this fall. The requirement will become effective at the beginning of the Fall 2021 term, contingent upon full FDA approval and available supplies.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to contact their pediatrician or clinics to find out what measures they have instituted to protect visiting patients and to schedule their child's vaccines as soon as possible.

For more information about childhood vaccinations, please visit:

- <https://www.immunizeca.org/>
- [Interim Guidance for Routine and Influenza Immunization Services during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Strategies for Catch-up Vaccination \(CDC\)](#)
- [2021 Recommended Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule](#)

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About the California Immunization Coalition

The California Immunization Coalition (CIC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit public-private partnership dedicated to achieving and maintaining full immunization protection for all Californians to promote health and prevent serious illness, disability and death. For more information, please visit [immunizeca.org](https://www.immunizeca.org) and follow CIC on social media @ImmunizeCA.

¹ <https://www.shotsforschool.org/k-12/>