

Immunization Exemptions

Answers for Parents

• Who decides which immunizations my child needs?

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), a group of experts in vaccine research and public health, finds the best ways to prevent vaccine-preventable diseases. The committee develops guidelines on the use and timing of vaccines. The California Health and Safety Code then establishes which immunizations are required for school entry. Division 105, Part 2, Chapter 1, Sections 120325-120380 of the code list the immunizations required for school entry and exemptions. To learn more, visit

<http://law.justia.com/california/codes/hsc/120325-120380.html>

To find free or low-cost immunizations for your child call 1-800-564-8448

• What exemptions are allowed?

Your child may be exempt from immunization requirements if:

- She/he has a medical condition that rules out one or more vaccines
- Immunization is against your religious or personal beliefs

You will need a written statement from your child's doctor and/or will need to sign an exemption statement (affidavit) stating that you understand that your child may be temporarily excluded from school for his/her protection during a disease outbreak.

• What are the risks of exemption?

Although exemptions are allowed in certain situations, disease risks exist. Studies show that children with exemptions are at higher risk of getting vaccine-preventable diseases than vaccinated children. To learn more, visit

<http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/284/24/3145?maxtoshow=&eaf>

• Will my exempt child be allowed into school?

If your child is exempt and there is a disease outbreak, the California Health and Safety Code says that the Health Officer may legally order the school to keep your child out of school for up to 21 days or more. This is for your child's protection and to prevent others from getting sick.

• My child has been excluded from school. What are my choices?

If your child has been temporarily excluded because of a disease outbreak, call your local school district office or the California Department of Education to find out about alternate methods of education. Many school districts provide opportunities for Home and Hospital Care Instruction, or Independent Study. For more information, visit

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/hh/> and <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/is/>

• Are vaccines safe and effective?

The US has the safest and most effective vaccine supply in history.

- The Food and Drug Administration reviews years of evidence to make sure that vaccines are safe and effective before they're licensed. Even after licensing, vaccines are still monitored.
- Most vaccine side effects are minor and temporary, like a sore arm or fever. Not being vaccinated is much more dangerous to your child than the side effects of the shots.

To learn more about vaccine safety, visit the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Vaccine Education Center website at

<http://www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/>

To find free or low-cost immunizations and check-ups for your child, call 1-800-564-8448



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