

Parent Education Required for Completion of Vermont's Religious Exemption Form

Why are vaccines required for school and child care entry?

Vaccines have saved millions of lives by preventing diseases like polio and measles, as well as life-threatening bacterial infections. State laws set minimum immunization requirements for attendance at child care, K-12 schools, colleges and universities to protect students, staff and visitors against vaccine-preventable diseases.

What are the risks of remaining unvaccinated?

Immunization is one of the best ways to reduce the chance that your child will be infected with a potentially harmful disease.¹ According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, "Most childhood vaccines are 90% to 99% effective in preventing disease. If a vaccinated child does get the disease, the symptoms are usually less serious than in a child who hasn't been vaccinated."² Unvaccinated children are at increased risk of infection from vaccine-preventable diseases.

The decision about whether to vaccinate your child also affects others in your community. To learn more about collective immunity, including why choosing not to vaccinate creates risk for vaccinated people and for people who are unable to be vaccinated, please review this [information sheet](#) from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Vaccine Education Center.³

What are the risks of vaccination?

Every parent wants to protect their child from infectious disease, but you may have questions about vaccine safety. Like any medicine, vaccines can sometimes cause side effects. However, serious reactions are extremely rare.⁴ The risk of being harmed from a vaccine is far lower than the risk of serious illness from a vaccine preventable disease.⁵

For answers to many common questions about vaccine safety, please review this [resource](#) published by California Department of Health and reviewed by the Vermont Department of Health.⁶ Each time your child gets a vaccine, you will be given a vaccine information sheet describing the benefits and risks in detail.⁷ You will have the opportunity to have your questions answered before consenting to vaccination.

You may also wish to independently review evidence on the safety of vaccines. Not all sources of information available on the internet are current or reliable. We recommend starting with this [list of vaccine safety studies](#) compiled by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which allows you to directly access the original journal articles.⁸

How are the vaccines that are required for child care or school selected?

There are three steps in the process of deciding which vaccines are required for children in child care and school:

1. The [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice \(ACIP\)](#) makes a recommendation. ACIP is a 15-member group of physicians and public health professionals who have specialized knowledge in immunizations. The group meets three times a year at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to review the latest evidence-based research and update recommendations.⁹
2. CDC then reviews, approves and publishes the ACIP recommendations.
3. Each state uses those recommendations to guide their own immunization requirements for child care and school. Not all of the recommended vaccines are required for admission to child care or school in Vermont. Vermont's process is outlined in the [Immunization Regulations – Section 8](#).¹⁰

What is done to make sure vaccines are safe?

Vaccine development typically requires 10 to 15 years of research.¹¹ Vaccines contain part of a germ (bacteria or virus) called an antigen, along with small amounts of other ingredients used to make the vaccine or to maintain its safety and effectiveness.¹² Antigens tell the body to produce an immune response to protect itself against infection. The antigen used in vaccines has already been killed or weakened before it's used to make the vaccine, so it can't give you the disease it's meant to protect you from.

The CDC monitors vaccine safety with multiple systems¹³ including:

- Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). If new adverse effects are discovered, safety alerts are widely distributed.¹⁴
- Vaccine Safety Datalink (VSD)¹⁵
- Clinical Immunization Safety Assessment Project (CISA)¹⁶

For more detailed information about vaccine safety monitoring from CDC, click [here](#).

Conclusion

Vaccines have dramatically reduced disease and death in the United States and globally. CDC's recommended vaccine schedule is designed to safely and effectively protect children when they need it most. The vaccine requirements for school and child care entry in Vermont help protect our students, staff and visitors from vaccine-preventable diseases.

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