

Ohio Department of Health

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ODH Updates Immunization Requirements to Protect School-Age Children from Preventable Diseases

COLUMBUS—The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) recently announced additional immunization requirements for Kindergarten and 7th grade students for the 2010-2011 school year.

The changes in effect for the 2010-11 school year are:

- The addition of a tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap) or tetanus and diphtheria (Td) booster requirement for 7th grade.
- The addition of a 2nd dose of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine for Kindergarten entry.
- A requirement that the final dose of polio vaccine be administered on or after the 4th birthday for Kindergarten entry.

“By requiring these additional vaccines, we hope to minimize the spread of preventable illnesses in schools and provide Ohio’s children with a healthier environment to learn,” said ODH Director Alvin D. Jackson, M.D.

These new Ohio requirements more closely reflect recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and involved consultation of local health districts, medical providers, the state Medicaid program, and a school nurse.

ODH wants parents of children entering the 7th grade to have their youngsters vaccinated with the Tdap vaccine to protect against pertussis (also known as whooping cough), a severe respiratory illness that causes violent, rapid coughing that can last for extended periods of time. Cases of pertussis, which mostly occur in school settings, nearly doubled in Ohio between 2008 (628 cases) and 2009 (1,096 cases).

Like pertussis, varicella (known as chickenpox) is a vaccine-preventable disease that continues to sicken Ohio’s school-age children. A second dose of varicella vaccine provides a child with 99 percent protection against the disease. By requiring this dose before school entry, ODH believes there will be a significant reduction in outbreaks of the disease in Ohio schools.

Ohioans looking for more information about the new immunization requirements, vaccines or vaccine-preventable disease can learn more at www.odh.ohio.gov or contact the Ohio Department of Health Immunization Program at 1-800-282-0546

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