

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR THE CALAIS HEALTH OFFICE

## GRADE SIX IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS

**Q: When should I send updated immunization records to the Health Office?**

**A:** Send immunization records to the Health Office the next day after receiving updated vaccines. They can be brought in by the student to the Health Office during the school year. They may also be faxed, mailed or dropped off in the Health Office or main office.

## Tdap VACCINE

**Q. Why did the state health department make Tdap a requirement for sixth grade entry?**

**A:** Acellular pertussis antigen is given as part of the Tetanus toxoid, reduced diphtheria toxoid vaccine. Pertussis, an acute, infectious cough illness, remains endemic in the United States. A primary reason for the continued circulation of *Bordetella pertussis* is that immunity to pertussis wanes approximately 5-10 years after completion of childhood pertussis vaccination, leaving adolescents and adults susceptible to pertussis. Pertussis is the least well-controlled reportable bacterial vaccine-preventable disease in the United States. Since the 1980s, the number of reported pertussis cases has been steadily increasing, especially among adolescents and adults. Pertussis is primarily transmitted from person to person through large respiratory droplets generated by coughing or sneezing. Persons with pertussis are most infectious during the catarrhal and early paroxysmal phases of illness. The disease is highly communicable, with attack rates as high as 80-90% among non-immune household contacts.

**Q: Some students will not be 11 years old upon entering the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Would a 10 year old be able to enter school in September?**

**A:** A 10 year old would not be required to receive the Tdap vaccine until 11 years of age per NJ's immunization regulations.

**Q: If a child is medically contraindicated from receiving pertussis vaccine, would receiving the Td vaccination suffice for the new 6<sup>th</sup> grade Tdap requirement?**

**A:** The NJ immunization requirement is for all 6<sup>th</sup> graders to receive the Tdap vaccine. The purpose of this requirement is to provide protection to this age cohort whose immunity to pertussis wanes from their last DTaP vaccination at 4-6 years of age. If a child cannot receive the pertussis component then they cannot receive Tdap and therefore would need to provide a medical exemption from their health care provider. In this circumstance, the Td vaccine is not a required vaccine for 6<sup>th</sup> grade entry; the Td vaccine is recommended to be given 10 years after their last DT as long as they have received at least three doses of DT.

## MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINE

**Q: Why did the state health department make meningococcal disease a requirement for 6<sup>th</sup> grade entry?**

**A:** Meningococcal disease is a severe infection of the blood or the meninges (the covering of the brain and spinal cord). It is caused by a bacterium (germ) called *Neisseria meningitidis*. Anyone can get the meningococcal disease, but pre-teens and teens are at greater risk for contracting the disease. According to the CDC, pre-teens and teens account for nearly 30% of all cases reported in the US. The disease is spread by exchange of respiratory droplets and close personal contact with infected persons, such as through kissing, uncovered face-to-face coughing and sneezing, sharing eating utensils, food or drink or living in the same household or living quarters, such as sleep-away camp. According to organizations such as the Academy of Pediatrics and the Society for Adolescent Medicine, the 11 year old health visit is the optimal time for adolescents to receive the meningococcal vaccine.

**Q: Some 6<sup>th</sup> graders will not be 11 years old upon entering the Middle School. Would a 10 year old be able to enter school in September?**

**A:** Yes, a 10 year old entering 6<sup>th</sup> grade will not be required to receive the Meningococcal containing vaccine until they turn 11 years of age.

### **EXEMPTIONS TO VACCINES**

**Q: What types of exemptions are acceptable in meeting the 6<sup>th</sup> grade requirements?**

**A: 1. Religious exemption:** N.J.S.A 26:1A-9.1 provides an exemption for pupils from mandatory immunization "if the parent or guardian of the pupil object in a written statement signed by the parent or guardian upon the grounds that the proposed immunization interferes with the free exercise of the pupil's religious rights."

**2. Medical Exemption:** N.J.A.C. 8:57-4.3 allows for exemptions to immunizations which are medically contraindicated. A written statement shall be submitted to the school from a physician licensed to practice medicine or osteopathy or an advanced practice nurse indicating that an immunization is medically contraindicated for a specific period of time, and the reason(s) for the medical contraindication based upon valid medical reasons by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

**3. Other:** Objections to vaccination based on grounds which are not medical or religious in nature and which are of a philosophical, moral, secular or more general nature continue to be unacceptable.

**Q: Are serology titers acceptable as laboratory evidence of immunity in lieu of completing a vaccination series?**

**A:** Yes, laboratory evidence of protective immunity, as enumerated by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the United States Public Health Service, shall be accepted as evidence of immunization if a parent or guardian cannot produce a documented history of immunization.

## **ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL**

**Q: When should I keep my child home from school?**

**A:** Please keep your sick child home until fully recovered and fever free for at least 24 hours. (Fever free without the use of fever reducing medication)

**Do not send your child to school if he or she**

- Has had a fever of 100 Fahrenheit or higher in the last 24 hours
- Has had vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- Has signs of "pink eye" or conjunctivitis
- Has an unfamiliar rash
- Has a persistent cough, excessively runny nose or persistent sore throat

**Q: If my child was sent home from school, when can he or she return to school?**

**A:** If your child was sent home with vomiting, diarrhea or fever, he or she must stay home for the next 24 hours and be fever free (see above).

**Q: What is required for my child to return to school following an injury or surgery?**

**A:** If your child saw a physician for treatment of an injury or surgery, a note from that physician is required for clearance to return to school.

If your child is unable to participate in physical education, a note from the treating physician is required.

Please remember that your child will need a note from the treating physician when he or she is cleared to return to physical education.

**Q: What is required for my child who will need to use crutches at school?**

**A:** If your child will need temporary use of crutches at school, you will need to provide a note from the treating physician indicating the need for crutches and the anticipated timeframe for using the crutches at school.

Please notify the health office or main office prior to sending your child to school with crutches so we can make provide staffing accommodations for your child.