

Alaska Immunization Fact Sheet 2002-03

Immunization Requirements for 2002-03

Vaccine-Preventable Disease	School (K-12)	Childcare Facility/Head Start/Preschool ¹
DtaP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, acellular Pertussis)	◆	◆
Polio	◆	◆
MMR (Measles, Mumps Rubeolla)	◆	◆
Hepatitis A	◆	◆
Hepatitis B	◆	◆
Hib	Not required	◆
Varicella	Not required	◆

PRESCHOOL¹-At the beginning of the 2001/2002 school year, different vaccines were required for children in licensed childcare facilities versus certified preschools, even though children attending both settings were in the same age group. This difference was caused by an inadvertent omission when the overall immunization requirements were modified in 2001. During February 2002, the Department of Education and Early Development revised the regulations so there was no difference in the requirements between these two types of facilities. Therefore, in addition to the other required vaccines, all children attending a childcare facility, HeadStart program, OR PRESCHOOL now are required to be immunized against *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) and varicella (or have a history of varicella disease).

VACCINE-PREVENTABLE DISEASES:

Diphtheria - Caused by bacteria which can infect the nose, throat and lungs. Breathing becomes difficult and the child can suffocate. Death results in one out of 10 cases.

Tetanus - (Lockjaw) Caused by harmful bacteria that enter the body through a cut or wound. This disease causes painful tightening of the muscles, usually all over the body. Three out of 10 people who get tetanus die.

Pertussis - (Whooping Cough) Causes coughing spells so severe that it is hard to eat, drink or breathe. This can last for weeks. Pertussis also can result in brain damage or death, especially in infants.

Polio - Once a common cause of paralysis in the United States. It is important to be protected against polio because this virus still exists in the world.

Measles - A serious childhood disease, that causes rash, cough, runny nose, eye irritation, and fever. It spreads very easily and can lead to hearing loss, pneumonia, brain damage, and even death.

Mumps - Causes headache, fever, and swelling of the cheeks and jaw. It can lead to hearing loss, meningitis (inflammation of brain), and brain damage.

Rubella - (German Measles) Usually a mild disease in children, causing only a slight fever and rash. However, pregnant women who get rubella can lose their babies or have babies with severe birth defects.

Haemophilus influenzae type b - (Hib) A dangerous childhood disease that can cause meningitis (inflammation of the brain), loss of hearing, seizures, mental retardation and death. It is most serious in infants under one year of age.

Hepatitis A - A serious viral infection of the liver which causes fever, yellow eyes and skin (jaundice), loss of appetite and nausea. It is spread from person-to-person or through contaminated food or water. Hepatitis A infection has been a major health problem in Alaska. In 1993, four Alaskans died from this disease.

Hepatitis B - A serious disease of the liver which is caused by a different virus than Hepatitis A. People who have the infection may suffer from liver failure or liver cancer, which is often fatal. The earlier in life a person is infected, the more likely he or she is to become a lifelong carrier of the disease and pass it on to others.

Varicella - (Chickenpox) A common childhood disease. It is usually mild, but it can be serious, especially in infants and adults. It can lead to severe skin infection, scars, pneumonia, brain damage and death. In the United States, about 100 people per year die from complications of chickenpox disease.



WHY ARE THESE IMMUNIZATIONS IMPORTANT?

For many years the backbone of Alaska's disease prevention efforts has been the appropriate immunization of children attending our schools and childcare facilities. Enforcement of these requirements has nearly eliminated vaccine-preventable diseases that in the past caused significant illness and death. This success is the direct result of the tremendous partnerships that have developed among school and childcare facility personnel, health care professionals, and parents. This support and commitment will ensure that Alaska's children do not suffer the consequences of diseases that can be prevented safely and effectively.

TEMPORARY VACCINE SHORTAGES:

In the past few years a variety of factors have led to shortages/delays in the availability of some required or recommended vaccines. Some Alaska immunization requirements have been changed in response to these shifting vaccine supplies. For example, adolescent **tetanus/diphtheria (Td)** boosters have been temporarily deferred since 2000. Because of shortages in **varicella (chickenpox)** vaccine, Alaska providers limited use of this vaccine to those children needing a dose to attend a childcare facility, HeadStart program, or preschool. This has allowed the varicella requirement to remain intact in spite of the temporary shortage of this vaccine. Vaccine supplies are constantly changing, but, with a few minor exceptions, most vaccine shortages should be lessened by the beginning of the school in the fall of 2002. When vaccines become available and requirements (such as Td) are reinstated, ample notice of changes will be provided to ensure plenty of time and opportunity to have your child properly immunized.

WHERE TO GET IMMUNIZATIONS AND INFORMATION:

Childhood vaccines are available at physician offices, clinics and public health centers throughout the state. For additional information talk to your doctor or nurse or call the Alaska Immunization Hotline:

Toll free: 1-888-430-4321

In Anchorage: 269-8088

Or visit our website at www.epi.state.ak.us and select "Infectious Disease", then select "Immunization Program".

