

New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH)

Vaccine Preventable Disease Program

Questions & Answers

Q: Will New Jersey waive the vaccine requirements for school attendance for the upcoming school year in light of the COVID-19 Pandemic?

A: The value of immunizations is even more evident during this pandemic. Receiving timely immunizations and ensuring compliance with New Jersey school immunization requirements is key to reducing the potential for vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks.

The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) will not waive the vaccine requirements nor will there be any extensions for the upcoming school year. Students will be expected to comply with all vaccine requirements prior to attending virtually or in-person at a New Jersey child care/preschool and school. New Jersey still allows for medical and religious exemptions when applicable.

The potential for the spread of infectious diseases is increased whenever individuals are brought into group settings. New Jersey has minimum vaccine requirements for school attendance. Following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recommended immunization is encouraged to provide optimal protection from vaccine-preventable diseases. Ensuring that vaccines are up-to-date can help protect schools and communities from vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks during the COVID19 pandemic.

Q: Why are vaccinations required for children participating in virtual/remote learning?

A: N.J.A.C. 8:57-4, Immunization of Pupils in School rules are applicable to all students (in-person or remote) attending NJ Schools. The overall purpose of the immunization rules is to protect individuals, schools, and communities from vaccine preventable diseases. Students who are learning remotely may still be at risk in the event they meet up with friends and/or congregate in their communities. These interactions along with drops in routine pediatric immunization coverage can increase the risk of vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks in the school setting and the community.

As social distancing requirements are relaxed, children who are not protected by vaccines will be more vulnerable to diseases. There is a vital need to ensure children receive timely immunizations and/or achieve rapid catch-up vaccination. Parental concerns regarding exposing their children to COVID-19 during well child visits should be discussed with their healthcare provider. Many healthcare practices have created extra precautions and policies in place to ensure vaccines can be administered in an environment that maximizes patient safety.

Receiving timely immunizations and ensuring compliance with New Jersey school immunization requirements is key in keeping our schools and community safe from vaccine preventable diseases.

Q: Is it safe to take my child to the doctor to receive vaccines?

A: The New Jersey Department of Health encourages parents to contact their healthcare provider to set up an appointment and to learn what policies and procedures are in place to for an immunization visit (e.g. separate days for sick vs. well visits, drive thru immunizations, etc.) Many healthcare practices have implemented additional precautions and policies to ensure vaccines can be administered in an environment that maximizes patient safety.

The value of immunizations is even more evident during this pandemic. Receiving timely immunizations is key to reducing the potential for vaccine preventable disease outbreaks. For more information regarding routine immunization during COVID-19, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/visit/vaccination-during-COVID19.html>