

To: Parents/guardians of students enrolled in Colorado schools
From: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Immunization Branch
Re: Tdap vaccine required for sixth-grade entry

Dear Parent/Guardian, *(health care providers, please see reverse side).*

Colorado law [requires](#) students who are entering sixth grade to receive a tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap) vaccine before their first day of school.

The Tdap vaccine can prevent tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis. Tetanus enters the body through cuts or wounds and cannot be spread from person to person. Diphtheria and pertussis spread from person to person.

- **Tetanus** causes painful stiffening of the muscles. Tetanus can lead to serious health problems, including the inability to open your mouth, difficulty swallowing and breathing, and death.
- **Diphtheria** can lead to difficulty breathing, heart failure, paralysis, and death.
- **Pertussis**, also known as “whooping cough,” can cause uncontrollable, violent coughing that makes it hard to breathe, eat, or drink. Pertussis can be extremely serious, especially in infants and young children, and can cause pneumonia, convulsions, brain damage, or death. In teens and adults, it can cause weight loss, loss of bladder control, passing out, and rib fractures from severe coughing.

While the Tdap vaccine is typically given at age 11 for students who are entering sixth grade, it may also be given as early as 10 years of age. When it is given at age 10, it will: 1) Count as a valid adolescent Tdap dose, and 2) meet Colorado’s sixth grade Tdap school vaccine requirement.

Is your sixth-grader missing their Tdap vaccine? Click [here](#) to find an immunization provider near you.

If your child does not receive Tdap vaccine at sixth-grade entry, regardless of their age, a certificate of [medical](#) or [nonmedical](#) exemption must be submitted to the school. This will ensure your student is compliant with Colorado school immunization law and able to attend school.

For clinical questions about vaccines or more information, email cdphe_vacs@cdphe.co.us.

To: Health care providers
From: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Immunization Branch
Re: Tdap vaccine required for sixth-grade entry

Dear health care provider, (parents and guardians, please see reverse side).

Colorado law [requires](#) students who are 10 or 11 years of age and entering sixth grade to receive a Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis) vaccine before the start of the school year.

The [Colorado Board of Health Rule](#) aligns with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) [immunization schedule](#). While Tdap vaccine is typically given at age 11 for students entering sixth grade, it may also be given at 10 years of age. This is [allowed by CDC](#). A Tdap dose given at age 10 will count as a valid adolescent Tdap dose and meet Colorado's sixth grade Tdap school vaccine requirement.

Per Colorado law, prior to school entry, the student's parent/guardian is responsible for submitting a student's school-required vaccine records. If these are not submitted to the school, the student's parent/guardian is responsible for submitting a Certificate of [Medical](#) or [Nonmedical](#) Exemption in order for their student to attend school. *Refer to this [CDC web page](#) for definitions of medical contraindications to vaccines.*

Immunizations are the best protection against vaccine-preventable diseases. Access the following resources to support children and adolescents in staying current or catching up with their routine vaccines, including Tdap and DTaP.

Routinely timed vaccines:

- [Child and adolescent immunization schedule](#) (CDC)

Catch up guidance:

- [Children and adolescents 10 through 18 years of age](#) (PDF)
- [Children and adolescents who start late or are >1 month behind](#) (CDC)

The Colorado Immunization Branch provides access to a nurse consultant who can address vaccine-related questions. Please call CDPHE at 303-692-2700, Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., and ask for the School and Child Care Nurse Consultant who can address your school-required vaccines questions or email cdphe_vacs@state.co.us.