



ParentPages

SHOTSMARTS FROM IMMUNIZE GEORGIA

Shots Aren't Just for Attending School and Child Care

Each year experts put together a “schedule” of shots your child should receive in order to be fully protected against serious diseases. They also make recommendations about the age your child should be to receive these shots. Three key groups that come together to make these decisions are the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

For many reasons, not all the shots on the recommended schedule may be required for children to enter school or attend child care, Head Start and Pre-K programs. However, even if a shot is not required, your child should still receive that recommended shot.

Currently four shots are recommended but not required for child care or school attendance in Georgia:

- Influenza
- Meningococcal
- Rotavirus
- Human Papillomavirus – females 9 through 26 years of age

Both rotavirus vaccine (Rota) and human papillomavirus vaccine (HPV) were recently approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and are new to the 2007 Childhood and Adolescent Immunization Schedule.

Rotavirus is the most common cause of severe diarrhea among children, resulting each year in the hospitalization of approximately 55,000 children in the United States and the death of over 600,000 children worldwide. The new rotavirus shot (Rota) is recommended to be given in three doses at ages 2, 4 and 6 months. It should not be given to infants aged less than 6 weeks or older than 8 months (32 weeks).



Leah Marie Matthiessen, born December 23, 2006, is keeping up with her shots.

Human Papillomavirus is the name of a group of more than 100 different types of viruses that are sexually transmitted and which are estimated to cause 70 percent of all cervical cancer cases. HPV is thus the second shot, after hepatitis B vaccine, that protects people against a form of cancer. For this reason, it is now recommended for all girls aged 11 through 12 years, although it can be given to girls as young as age 9. It requires three shots to be fully protected. Catch-up shots are recommended for girls aged 13 through 26 years who have not had the vaccine previously or who have not completed the full three-shot series.

Influenza (flu) is a disease that affects the lungs and can be very serious for young children. They are even more likely to have severe illness or be hospitalized due to this disease than are the elderly. Since 2006, children 6 through 59 months have been recommended to get this shot every year.

Meningococcal Meningitis is a serious, potentially life-threatening infection of the fluid around a person's spinal cord and the fluid that surrounds the brain. It is especially serious for children and can spread quickly in close living conditions. Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4) is recommended for children at age 11 through 12 years, children entering high school and college freshman who are living in a dorm.

Shots Are For All Ages

MCV4 and HPV are good examples of shots recommended for adolescents, rather than babies and small children. Many childhood vaccines also have booster shots that need to be taken throughout the teenage years and adult life. These include tetanus-diphtheria (Td) or tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap) booster doses (for adolescents).

To see if your child, or even you, is due for a recommended shot, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/child-schedule.htm#printable>. Be sure to check the schedule and/or ask your child's doctor at least once a year whether any new shots have been added to the recommended schedule for his age group. ■

New Vaccine Requirements for Entering School or Attending Child Care, Head Start and Pre-K Programs

Georgia has added two new vaccines (shots) to the list required for entering school or attending child care, Head Start and Pre-K programs.

The state also has a new Certificate of Immunization (Form 3231). The Georgia Department of Human Resources approved the new requirements on February 21, 2007, and they take effect on July 1, 2007.

The changes were made to align the list of required shots more closely with the current recommendations of several key organizations that keep track of the latest research on all available shots. These include the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), all of which are made up of experts from all over the country.

Required new shots

- Now all children born on or after January 1, 2006 must receive the Hepatitis A series of two shots.
- All children under age 5 must have received one or more shots against pneumococcal disease. Be sure and check with your doctor for the correct schedule for your child as the number of doses depends on your child's age when started on the series of shots.

Required second doses

- New second doses have also been added to two previously required shots—varicella (chickenpox) and mumps—for all children entering kindergarten and sixth grade, as well as "new entrants"* into a Georgia school at any grade level.

The complete list of shots which children are required to have for school enrollment or child care attendance now includes:

- Diphtheria
- Hepatitis A - if born on or after 1-1-06
- Hepatitis B
- Measles
- Mumps (two doses)
- Pertussis
- Polio
- Rubella
- Tetanus
- Varicella (chicken pox) - two doses
- Pneumococcal - children under age 5
- *Haemophilus Influenzae* type B (HIB) - children under age 5

Introducing a New, Improved Certificate of Immunization (Form 3231)

This year Georgia also revised the Certificate of Immunization (Form 3231) that your school or child care program needs to keep on file to show that your child has all the required shots. If your child is enrolled in school or child care and has a current certificate on file already, then you do not need to replace it until the expiration date arrives or the child reaches 6th grade. However, if your child is entering school, child care, Head Start or Pre-K for the first time in Georgia on or after July 1, 2007, you will need to make sure that your child has the new form.

The new Form 3231 looks a lot like the old one with a section listing all the required shots and columns to note the dates when they were given. It also includes spaces to indicate serologic immunity (i.e., if your child has had a blood test showing he cannot get the disease), disease histories (i.e., whether your child has had the disease already) or medical exemption (for a variety of reasons).

Finally, a new section has been added at the bottom to make it easy for you to note if your child has received shots that are recommended but not required for school attendance. Shots listed here include meningococcal vaccine (MCV/MPSV), rotavirus (RotaTeq®), human papillomavirus (HPV), influenza and tetanus-diphtheria (Td) or tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap) booster doses (for teenagers).

Resources:

More information about Georgia's new requirements for entering school and attending child care, as well as an example of Georgia's new Certificate of Immunization (Form 3231), can be found at the Georgia Immunization Program's Website:

<http://health.state.ga.us/programs/immunization>.

If you have questions, please call your local health department or the Georgia Immunization Program at (404) 657-3158.

*A "new entrant" is "any child entering any school or facility in Georgia for the first time or entering after having been absent from a Georgia school or facility for more than 12 months or one school year." ■