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## **Parents reminded to get kids immunized by Feb. 17**

***Oregon students will be excluded from school without up-to-date immunization documentation***

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Public health officials are advising parents that children won't be able to go to school or child care starting Feb. 17 if their records on file show missing immunizations.

State law requires that all children in public and private schools, preschools, Head Start and certified child care facilities be up-to-date on their immunizations, or have a religious or medical exemption.

"The goal is to make sure children are fully protected against vaccine-preventable diseases. If school and child care shot records are not up-to-date, the child will be sent home," said Lorraine Duncan, immunization manager in the Oregon Department of Human Services Public Health Division.

If a child's immunization record shows that he or she has not received the required immunizations, parents or guardians will be sent a letter. Last year, local health departments sent 36,784 letters to parents and guardians informing them their children needed immunizations to stay in school. A total of 4,667 children were kept out of school or child care until the necessary immunization information was turned in to the schools or child care facilities. Most children who are excluded miss one or fewer days of school before turning in up-to-date records.

**(more)**

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The number of exclusion letters increased last year because two more vaccines, Tdap and hepatitis A, were required. Tdap is a tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough) booster. Whooping cough is still a health issue in Oregon with 273 cases recorded last year. One dose of Tdap vaccine is required for seventh- and eighth-graders. Hepatitis A is a two-dose series. One dose of hepatitis A is required for children 18 months and older to begin child care, preschool, kindergarten and first grade; the second dose is required no later than one year after the first dose.

“Vaccination against childhood diseases is one of the most cost-effective preventive measures we have. Making sure kids have all their shots and don’t miss school is a joint effort. Oregon Public Health provides technical help, but it’s the hard work and dedication of local health departments, schools and children’s facilities that really make this process work,” said Stacy de Assis Matthews, immunization school law coordinator, Oregon Public Health.

Many parents receive exclusion letters because their children’s school or day care records are not updated, even though they may have all their shots. School and child care staff may use Oregon Immunization ALERT, the statewide registry, to keep records current. However, parents are responsible for ensuring the school or day care has the required information. Public health officials advise parents to update their children’s immunization record at school or child care after every shot.

Parents seeking immunizations for their children should contact their health care provider or local health department, or call Oregon SafeNet at 1-800-SAFENET or 1-800-723-3638. No one can be turned away from a local health department because of the inability to pay for required vaccines. Contributions toward administration costs are always welcome. Additional information on school immunizations can be found at [www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/imm/school](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/imm/school).

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