

**New Jersey Department of Health
Vaccine Preventable Disease Program
Special Notice
January 2025**

Important Updates and Reminders

Immunization Requirements and Regulations

There are no new vaccination requirements for the 2024-2025 academic year and no amendments to the current requirements. All children must be age appropriately vaccinated to attend a New Jersey childcare, preschool or school.

The Department is undergoing rulemaking for the N.J.A.C. 8:57 rules, which includes Communicable Disease, NJIIS, School and Higher Ed rules, and TB subchapters.

- The Vaccine Preventable Disease Program is not proposing the addition of any new vaccines to the school requirements but is seeking to align immunization requirements specified in this subchapter with the current ACIP recommendations.
- Any actual proposed changes will be subject to a 60-day written comment period after publication in the New Jersey Register. The Department will communicate this to the public and the regulated communities.

New Jersey Vaccines for Children Program (NJVFC)

The NJVFC program offers all ACIP-recommended vaccines to ensure children are optimally protected against vaccine preventable diseases in New Jersey. Children through 18 years of age who are Medicaid eligible, uninsured, American Indian, or Alaska Native, or are underinsured are eligible to receive vaccines through the NJVFC program. Find an NJVFC location using the [new search tool](https://nj.gov/health/vaccines/programs/vfc/vfc-317-vaccine-locations) (nj.gov/health/vaccines/programs/vfc/vfc-317-vaccine-locations).

2024-2025 COVID-19 Vaccine Recommendation

CDC recommends **everyone ages 6 months and older receive a 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine** to protect against the potentially serious outcomes of COVID-19 this fall and winter. It is especially important to get your 2024–2025 COVID-19 vaccine if you are ages 65 and older, are at high risk for severe COVID-19 or have never received a COVID-19 vaccine. The virus that causes COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, is always changing and protection from COVID-19 vaccines declines over time. COVID-19 vaccines are updated to give you the best protection from the currently circulating strains. COVID-19 vaccines are available from Moderna, Novavax, and Pfizer. Check with your health care provider to make sure you are up to date with COVID-19 and other routine immunizations. More information is available at cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html.

2024-2025 Influenza Vaccine

The 2024–2025 Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) influenza vaccine recommendations are available at cdc.gov/flu/media/pdfs/2024/08/acip-2024-25-summary-of-recommendations.pdf.

The ACIP recommends annual flu vaccination for everyone 6 months and older who do not have any contraindications. People with egg allergy may get any vaccine (egg-based or non-egg-based) that is otherwise appropriate for their age and health status. Egg allergy necessitates no additional safety measures for influenza vaccination beyond those recommended for any recipient of any vaccine. Regardless of allergy history, all vaccines should be administered in settings in which personnel and equipment needed for rapid recognition and treatment of acute allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis, are available. For most persons who need only one dose of influenza vaccine for the season, vaccination should ideally be offered during September or October. However, vaccination should continue throughout the season as long as influenza viruses are circulating.

Getting the flu vaccine can markedly lower the risk of influenza-related illness, hospitalization, and death. Visit cdc.gov/flu/index.html and nj.gov/health/cd/topics/flu.shtml for more information.

Outside of the current CDC recommendations, the NJDOH will continue accepting an egg allergy as a medical exemption as long as the severity is communicated. A medical exemption simply stating a child cannot receive flu vaccine because of an egg allergy will not be accepted unless it is a severe (anaphylactic) reaction. Furthermore, a previous severe allergic reaction to the flu vaccine, regardless of the component suspected of being responsible for the reaction, is a contraindication to future receipt of the vaccine.

The NJDOH DSH (Daycares, Schools, and Higher Education) Team

The Daycares, Schools, and Higher Education (DSH) Team prioritizes collaboration, education, and training to strengthen public health and minimize infectious disease transmission in daycares, schools, and higher education institutions. The DSH team creates educational materials for school nurses, childcare providers, school administrators, institutes of higher education, and other stakeholders. If you have specific communicable disease training needs, please contact the DSH team at CDS.REP.Communications@doh.nj.gov. For a database of current available webinars and educational materials, visit this webpage at https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/edu_training/dsh.shtml.

Infectious Disease Surveillance

As part of surveillance for various infectious conditions, NJDOH collects information on school absenteeism and known or suspected outbreaks. In accordance with Executive Order 302 and Executive Directive No. 21-011, K-12 schools must report weekly data to NJDOH through the Surveillance for Infectious Conditions (SIC) Module in New Jersey's Communicable Disease Reporting and Surveillance System (CDRSS) as outlined in the K-12 SIC Module User Guide for Schools, under the Training Tab. This information is used to determine when circulating respiratory pathogens might be impacting school-aged children. This surveillance helps schools track their own absenteeism data and helps determine when additional public health assistance might be needed. Schools that are not yet part of this surveillance program should send an email to CDS.COV.RPT@doh.nj.gov to get enrolled and start reporting.

Communicable Disease in School and Child Care Settings

The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) requires that schools report unusual disease activity that may be occurring in the student population. This reporting regulation pertains to schools, preschools, childcare centers, youth camps and institutions of higher education.

Administrators of schools or childcare centers are required to call their local health department. A directory is available at localhealth.nj.gov when any illness occurs in the student population that is above normal, there is presence of any unusual disease activity, or a suspect or confirmed outbreak exists. Unusual activity may be indicated by increased student or staff absenteeism, physician notes disclosing a diagnosed disease, or an increase in students reporting to the nurses' office with similar symptoms or complaints.

- A dedicated school health page for easy access to the information about topics related to prevention and control of communicable disease in the school setting can be found on the NJDOH website Health Topics A-Z List at nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ including:
- Outbreak guidance documents
- School exclusion list
- Exposure notices
- School related illnesses
- Archived webinar on school surveillance and disease reporting

Schools and childcare programs should take a variety of actions every day to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, including the viruses that cause respiratory illness such as COVID-19, influenza, and RSV. The NJDOH School Health Page provides resources to help K-12 schools and childcare programs remain open and help their administrators support safe, in-person learning while reducing the spread of COVID-19. For more details, visit nj.gov/health/cd/topics/schoolhealth.shtml.

Immunization Initiatives

Adolescent Immunization Contest - Protect Me With 3+: Create, Educate, Vaccinate

The Partnership for Maternal and Child Health of Northern New Jersey, in collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Health, will host the thirteenth annual *Protect Me With 3+* poster and video contest. The contest challenges New Jersey middle and high school students in grades 5 through 12 to raise awareness about the importance of adolescent immunizations: tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (Tdap), human papillomavirus (HPV), meningococcal (MenACWY) flu, and COVID-19 vaccines. New Jersey educators are encouraged to make the *Protect Me With 3+* contest a class project. The website includes a page specifically for educators with tools to provide ideas and activities on how to include the contest in lesson plans. As an added incentive, for each category, the classroom with the most eligible submissions wins a prize!

To participate, youth must submit a video, or a hand drawn or original digital poster integrating key facts about one adolescent vaccine from the campaign website. Early bird submission deadline is January 30, 2025, and for all entries is February 28, 2025. A promotional toolkit is available electronically at no cost upon request. Please email info@protectmewith3.com to request a toolkit. For more information, visit protectmewith3.com.

NJ Hot Shots for Tots Immunization Campaign

The Hot Shots for Tots (HSFT) Immunization Campaign is a voluntary, point-based incentive program for childcare and preschool facilities. The campaign encourages and facilitates a collaboration with immunization stakeholders to promote best practices and improve immunization coverage. Participating in the program also has other benefits which include 1) the opportunity to showcase your facility's commitment to keeping kids healthy; 2) award and recognition from the New Jersey Department of Health and your Local Health Department; 3) activities that may help with meeting certain Quality Rating and National Accreditation Standards, such as meeting annual health and safety requirements; and 4) pride in knowing that your participation is part of the broader effort to reduce communicable diseases among kids in your community.

Participating facilities select from qualifying immunization-related activities to earn points toward reaching one of the three award levels: Gold, Silver, or Bronze. Examples of qualifying activities include attending an annual immunization workshop, participating in the New Jersey Immunization Information System (NJIIS), and providing information to parents about childhood immunizations. For a complete list of activities and more details about the campaign visit nj.gov/health/cd/imm_requirements/vpdp_hotshots.shtml.

The HSFT campaign is open to all childcare and preschool facilities in New Jersey. The 2024-2025 Campaign kick-off is scheduled for **January 10, 2025**. If your facility is interested in participating, please send an email to jenish.sudhakaran@doh.nj.gov.

New Jersey Influenza Honor Roll

The New Jersey Influenza Honor Roll (NJ IHR) is an initiative that serves to recognize institutions that encourage and promote flu prevention within their communities. There are four categories of eligible institutions: educational facilities, community-based organizations, businesses, and healthcare facilities. Institutions previously named to the NJ IHR are highlighted on the NJDOH website, including campaign ideas from the honorees. Applications for the 2024-25 flu season will be accepted through March 31, 2025. Please consider submitting an application detailing how you helped to prevent the flu.

For more information about the New Jersey Department of Health's Influenza Honor Roll, please visit nj.gov/health/cd/edu_training/vpdp_flu_honor_roll.shtml.

New Jersey Immunization Information System (NJIIS)

NJIIS is a free, confidential, secured, and population-based online system that collects and consolidates vaccination data for New Jersey's children and adults. The NJIIS is the official Immunization Registry per the Statewide Immunization Registry Act - NJAC 8:57, subchapter 3, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 26:4-131 et seq. (P.L. 2004, c. 138). NJIIS maintains immunization data on New Jersey residents and consolidates immunization information reported from multiple providers into individual patient records to help ensure providers have accurate information for clinical decision support.

NJIS is currently being utilized by healthcare providers (both private and Vaccines for Children (VFC) providers), childcare centers, public and private schools, colleges and universities, local public health and state departments, hospitals, pharmacies, and health insurance companies.

School nurses now have the capability to update student addresses and phone numbers in NJIS. They can manually update the contact information by logging into NJIS, clicking on the "Patient Information Tab" and enter the updated address under the self-address and relative address tab.

Schools who would like to establish a query interface with NJIS and your school's Electronic Health Record should access the "Getting Started" document. A variety of training, interactive workshops, and online webinars are conducted for end users to learn how to use the system and understand its functionality and capabilities for more information, visit NJIS online at and click "Enrollment and Training" to view contact information for the Maternal and Child Health Consortium Regional Trainer in your county or call the Vaccine Preventable Disease Program at (609) 826-4861.

Immunization Toolkits

Answering questions about vaccines can be difficult. Parents may have trouble sorting fact from fiction when researching vaccines online. A strong recommendation from a health care provider (hcp) is one of the greatest predictors for parental vaccine acceptance, but hcps may not have all the resources at their fingertips. For these reasons, the Vaccine Preventable Disease Program have immunization toolkits available for parents/guardians and health care providers. These toolkits include frequently asked questions, tips for spotting vaccine misinformation, strategies to increase immunization rates, and ways to keep a child calm when receiving vaccines. Visit the educational section of the Vaccine Preventable Disease Program website to access these materials, nj.gov/health/cd/vpdp.shtml.

Immunization Resources

- **ACIP Vaccine Recommendations**
 - cdc.gov/acip-recs/hcp/vaccine-specific/index.html
- **CDC Recommended Childhood & Adolescent Immunization and Catch-Up Schedules:**
 - cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/index.html
- ***HPV Vaccine:**
 - nj.gov/health/cd/topics/hpv.shtml

NOTE: N.J.S.A. 18A:40-42 requires public schools to annually distribute a fact sheet about vaccination against HPV to parents or guardians of students in grade seven. Private schools are encouraged, but not required, to distribute the fact sheet.

- ***Meningococcal Disease: Are You Protected?**
 - nj.gov/health/cd/topics/meningo.shtml
- NOTE: N.J.S.A. 18A:40-21.2 requires that school districts annually distribute the educational fact sheet on meningitis to parents or guardians of students entering sixth grade. The fact sheet is available to private schools, although they are encouraged, but not required, to distribute the fact sheet.***
- **New Jersey Vaccine Requirements and Guidance Materials**
 - nj.gov/health/cd/imm_requirements/
 - **New Jersey Immunization Information System (NJIS)**
 - <https://njiis.nj.gov/core/web/index.html>
 - **Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)**
 - nj.gov/health/rsv/
 - **State Vaccine Preventable Disease Program**
 - <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/vpdp.shtml>