



Vaccine Preventable Disease Program Special Notice December 2025

Important Updates and Reminders

Immunization Requirements and Regulations

There are no new vaccination requirements for the 2025-2026 academic year and no amendments to the current requirements. All children must be age appropriately vaccinated to attend a New Jersey child care, preschool, or school.

The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) has undergone rulemaking for the N.J.A.C. 8:57 rules, which includes Communicable Disease, New Jersey Immunization Information System (NJIS), School and Higher Education rules, and TB subchapters. Details about the rules are accessible on the Department's page at nj.gov/health/news/2025/approved/20250915a.shtml. Note, 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 immunization recommendations.

New Jersey Vaccines for Children Program (NJ VFC)

The NJ VFC program offers all 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 NJ VFC program. Find an NJ VFC location using the locator tool at nj.gov/health/vaccines/programs/vfc/vfc-317-vaccine-locations.

2025-2026 Influenza Vaccine

An annual flu vaccine is recommended for everyone six months and older who do not have any contraindications or medical reasons for not receiving vaccines. 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 if influenza viruses are circulating.

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.

Getting the flu vaccine can markedly lower the risk of influenza-related illness, hospitalization, and death. For more information visit nj.gov/health/respiratory-viruses/flu.

2025-2026 COVID-19 Vaccine Recommendation

Everyone ages six months and older can receive a 2025-2026 COVID-19 vaccine to protect against the potentially serious outcomes of COVID-19 this fall and winter. It is especially important to get the 2025-2026 COVID-19 vaccine for individuals who 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 the best protection from the currently circulating strains. COVID-19 vaccines are available from Moderna (also known as Spikevax and mRNA), Novavax (also known as Nuvaxovid), and Pfizer (also known as Comirnaty). 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 nj.gov/health/covid-19/information/vaccines

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.COVRPT@doh.nj.gov to get enrolled and start reporting.

Communicable Disease in School and Child Care Settings

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 remains open and help their administrators support safe, in-person learning while reducing the spread of COVID-19. For more details, visit [School Health](#).

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 NJDOH, will host the 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. The deadline for all submissions is January 31, 2026. 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 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, including:

- 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.

The campaign is open to all childcare and preschool facilities in New Jersey. The 2025-2026 campaign kick-off is tentatively scheduled for **January 20, 2026**. 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 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 health care facilities. Institutions previously named to the Influenza Honor Roll are highlighted on the NJDOH website, including campaign ideas from the honorees. Applications for the 2025-26 flu season will be accepted through March 31, 2026. Please consider submitting an application detailing how you helped to prevent the flu.

For more information about NJDOH's Influenza Honor Roll, visit: nj.gov/health/cd/edu_training/vpdp_flu_honor_roll.

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.

NJIIS is currently being utilized by health care 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 NJIIS. They can manually update the contact information by logging into NJIIS, clicking on the “Patient Information Tab,” and entering the updated address under the self-address and relative address tab.

Schools that would like to establish a query interface with NJIIS 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 NJIIS online at njiis.nj.gov and click “Enrollment and Training” to view contact information for the NJIIS 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 is one of the greatest predictors for parental vaccine acceptance, but providers may not have all the resources at their fingertips. For these reasons, the Vaccine Preventable Disease Program has 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.

Immunization Resources

- **CDC Recommended Childhood & Adolescent Immunization and Catch-Up Schedules:**
 - cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-schedules/index
- **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Recommended Childhood & Adolescent Immunization Schedules:**
 - downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/AAP-Immunization-Schedule
- **Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine:**
 - nj.gov/health/cd/topics/hpv
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
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 (NJIIS)**
 - njiis.nj.gov/core/web/index
- **Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)**
 - nj.gov/health/rsv
- **State Vaccine Preventable Disease Program**
 - nj.gov/health/cd/vpdp