



News Release

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Washington kindergarteners get required school immunizations at higher rate

The immunization exemption rate for the same kids held steady

OLYMPIA — More kindergarteners in our state have all the vaccines they need to enter school. For the 2012-2013 school year, 85.5 percent of kindergarteners had all the vaccines required for school entry — a 1 percent increase from the previous school year. The rate for the required vaccines has continued to climb since an all-time low in 2008-2009.

“This is encouraging because it means the youngest kids in school are starting off their education protected from diseases that vaccines can prevent,” said Secretary of Health John Wiesman.

“The health of our children is important in so many ways. Better health in childhood makes it easier for kids to learn, and increases the likelihood they’ll live a long, healthy adult life.”

The rate for pertussis vaccination in 2012-2013, a disease that’s been at epidemic levels in our state, is at 92.4 percent — an increase of 1.5 percent from last year. It’s the highest pertussis vaccine completion rate for kindergarteners since the state began to collect this data in the 2006-2007 school year. The increase may be due to more awareness of the vaccine generated during our state’s whooping cough epidemic in 2012.

“The whooping cough epidemic in our state was a sad reminder that lives are at stake,” said State Health Officer Dr. Maxine Hayes. “It’s great that more kids are getting vaccinated against pertussis. The disease will always be in our state at some level, so we can’t let our guard down.”

Parents are allowed to get an exemption from vaccine requirements under certain conditions: a medical condition, personal beliefs, religious beliefs, or membership in a religious body. The law changing the process for getting an immunization exemption took effect in 2011, requiring health care providers to sign each exemption form when a medical, personal, or religious exemption is claimed.

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The rates for kids entering kindergarten with any type of exemption held steady in 2012-2013 at 4.6 percent. In the previous school year, 4.5 percent of kindergarteners claimed an immunization exemption, down from 6 percent the year before.

This is the first year the Department of Health measured the religious membership exemption, and it is .08 percent. This very low rate suggests that parents aren't claiming this exemption type out of convenience, since it doesn't require a health care provider's signature. It will take a few years of data to spot trends in this exemption type.

Find more information on [school immunization data](#) and [immunization for kids](#) online.

Washington provides all recommended vaccines for kids through age 18, available from healthcare providers across the state. Providers may charge an office visit fee and an administration fee to give the vaccine. People who can't afford the administration fee can ask to have it waived.

For help finding a healthcare provider or an immunization clinic, call your [local health agency](#), visit the [ParentHelp123 resource finder](#) or call the [Family Health Hotline](#) at 1-800-322-2588.

The [Department of Health website](#) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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