

For Immediate Release

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Hep A and Meningococcal Vaccines to be required for 2019-20 School Year

Vaccine changes effective August 2

Two new vaccines will be required for school-age children for the 2019-20 School Year: Meningococcal and Hepatitis A. KDHE proposed changes to the vaccine requirement regulations earlier this year and held a public hearing concluding a 60-day public comment period in June. The regulations were approved by KDHE and will go into effect on August 2.

“We received many comments and input from all viewpoints,” KDHE Secretary Lee Norman said. “We listened and read all of the input and concerns submitted to us. We looked at the evidence. Both Meningitis and Hepatitis A illnesses are severe and preventable, and the safety profile of the vaccines is well-recognized. As an agency charged to establish policies that protect and improve the lives of Kansans, we felt the addition of the two vaccines was essential for the health and safety of our state.”

Changes for 2019-20 School Year

- Students entering **Kindergarten and Grade 1** for the 2019 -2020 school year now need two doses of the **hepatitis A vaccine**.
- Students entering **Grade 7** for the 2019-2020 school year need one dose of the **meningococcal ACWY vaccine**.
- Students entering **Grade 11** need one dose of the **meningococcal ACWY vaccine** if not vaccinated prior to their 16th birthday. They will need two doses if their first dose was before their 16th birthday.

Vaccine requirements for schools can be found online at: <http://www.kdheks.gov/immunize/schoolInfo.htm>.

About the Vaccines

Meningococcal ACWY Vaccine

The meningococcal ACWY vaccine protects against meningococcal disease. Meningococcal disease has two common outcomes: meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and bloodstream infections. The bacteria that cause meningococcal disease spread through the exchange of nose and throat droplets, such as when coughing, sneezing, or kissing. Symptoms include sudden onset of fever, headache, and stiff neck. With bloodstream infection, symptoms also include a dark purple rash. About one of every 10 people who gets the disease dies from it. Survivors of meningococcal disease may lose their arms or legs, become deaf, have problems with their nervous systems, become developmentally disabled, or suffer seizures or strokes.

Hepatitis A Vaccine

The hepatitis A vaccine protects against the hepatitis A virus. The virus is spread primarily person to person through the fecal-oral route. In other words, the virus is taken in by mouth from contact with objects, food, or drinks contaminated by the feces (stool) of an infected person. Symptoms can include fever, tiredness, poor appetite, vomiting, stomach pain and sometimes jaundice (when skin and eyes turn yellow). An infected person may have no symptoms, may have mild illness for a week or two, may have severe illness for several months, or may rarely develop liver failure and die from the infection. In the U.S., about 100 people a year die from hepatitis A.

Exemptions from Vaccines

There are exemptions to vaccines. In accordance with KSA 72-6262, legal alternatives to vaccination requirements include medical contraindications and religious beliefs. The medical exemptions signed by a medical clinician must be submitted on an annual basis by the family/guardian of the student. There could also be instances in which a person has a religious belief that prevents them from receiving a particular vaccination. The parent/guardian of the student must submit a written statement indicating they are adherent of a religious denomination whose religious teachings are opposed to such vaccination. The school board or governing body for nonpublic schools are responsible for ensuring compliance with the regulations and statutes.

Note to Media:

Video segments of Secretary Norman speaking regarding the vaccines are available for download and broadcast at: <http://www.kdheks.gov/media/>.