

# Religious Exemptions to Immunizations

## What Parents Need to Know

Vaccine –preventable diseases are still with us. Immunizations are the best protection against these harmful diseases. Vaccines are safe and effective and were developed to protect individuals from dangerous and sometimes deadly diseases. A high proportion of the children must be vaccinated to prevent outbreaks of disease in school settings.

Choosing not to immunize a child greatly increases the risk of their getting serious diseases like pertussis, measles, mumps, invasive meningococcal disease, and chickenpox that can cause severe complications such as difficulty breathing, pneumonia, brain damage, and even death. This risk would be lifelong, and both unimmunized adolescents and adults may have more severe forms of certain vaccine preventable diseases if they were not immunized as children.

Children and adolescents who are not immunized can transmit vaccine–preventable diseases throughout the community to babies who are too young to be fully immunized or to others who can't be immunized because of medical reasons.

Choosing not to immunize a child by claiming a religious exemption is a parent's right; however, it carries significant responsibility. The child who is exempt from one or more vaccinations is considered susceptible to the disease or diseases for which the vaccinations offer protection. To protect inadequately vaccinated individuals and the entire communities, an unimmunized child shall be excluded from school during disease outbreaks. This can cause hardship on the child and parent such as missed education for the child and missed work for the parent. No exceptions are made, regardless of the circumstances.

Claiming a religious exemption represents a parent or guardians' belief that the family religious preference does not support immunizing against vaccine–preventable diseases.

A Certificate of Religious Exemption can be obtained from your private healthcare provider, local health department, local pharmacy, or a licensed healthcare facility administering immunizations and must be completed and filed with the school administrator.

It is unlawful for any child to attend school unless the child has been adequately immunized or unless the parent or guardian has signed and filed a Certificate of Religious or Medical Exemption to immunizations.

IMMUNIZATIONS MAY SAVE YOUR CHILD'S LIFE.



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