



# Arkansas Department of Health

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Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders

Renee Mallory, RN, BSN, Secretary of Health

Jennifer Dillaha, MD, Director

## Arkansas 2023-2024 Immunization Exemption Application Packet for Childcare or School Students

**The Arkansas Board of Health requires that all children attending childcare facilities and public or private schools in the State of Arkansas be immunized against vaccine-preventable diseases.** The Arkansas Department of Health is authorized by Act 999 of 2003 to grant individual exemptions from the immunization requirements. This packet contains an application for exemption, which you have requested, or you may complete the online application at <https://OnlineImmunizationExemption.ADH.Arkansas.gov/>.

**An application requesting an exemption must be submitted for each child. An application with a notarized signature of the parent or guardian must be submitted each school year to the Department of Health.** Only a 2023-2024 Immunization Exemption Application will be accepted for the 2023-2024 school year. When approved, exemptions will be effective for the start of the Fall session in 2023 and go through the summer sessions of 2024.

As part of the application, the law requires that the parent/guardian complete an educational activity when requesting an exemption. The required educational activity can be met by reading the enclosed Vaccine Information Statements from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. These statements provide information about the required vaccines. On page 6 of this application packet, you are asked to sign that you have received and reviewed the Vaccine Information Statements, that you understand the risks and benefits of the vaccines, and that you still choose to request an exemption. This form must also be signed by a Notary Public.

**Please submit your completed application to the Arkansas Department of Health Immunization Section. Be sure to complete each part of the application. Applications that are incomplete will not be accepted and will be returned to you for completion.** This delay will increase the time needed for processing your application. We will send you a letter of approval or denial within ten working days of receiving a completed application. If your application is not complete, we will send you a checklist showing the reason(s) we were unable to process your application. You will then need to include the requested information and return the updated application for processing as soon as possible by fax, email, or mail; see page six of the application.

**After you have received your approval letter, you are responsible for notifying your child's daycare or school that your exemption request has been approved. You are responsible for retaining the original letter.** A copy of the approval letter is to be placed in your child's file at the daycare or school. Release of information will be provided only to the custodial parent/guardian who completes this application and according to the notarized signature. If you have questions, please call the Immunization Section toll free at 1-800-574-4040.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Dillaha, M.D.".

Jennifer Dillaha, MD  
Director and State Health Officer

## **If You Choose Not to Vaccinate Your Child, Understand the Risks and Responsibilities.**

If you choose to delay some vaccines or reject some vaccines entirely, there can be risks.

Be aware:

- Any vaccine-preventable disease can strike at any time in the U.S. because all of these diseases still circulate either in the U.S. or elsewhere in the world.
- Some of the vaccine-preventable diseases that still circulate in the U.S. include pertussis (whooping cough), varicella (chickenpox), *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib, which is a cause of meningitis), and influenza. These diseases, as well as the other vaccine-preventable diseases, can range from mild to severe and life-threatening. In most cases, there is no way to know beforehand if a child will get a mild or serious case.

When there is a vaccine-preventable disease in your community:

- It may not be too late to get protection by getting vaccinated.
- If there are cases (or, in some circumstances, a single case) of a vaccine-preventable disease in your community, you may be asked to take your child out of school, childcare, or organized activities (for example, playgroups or sports).
- Your school, childcare facility, or other institution will tell you when it is safe for an unvaccinated child to return. Be prepared to keep your child home for several days and up to several weeks.

### **Why vaccinate?**

**Vaccines save lives** and protect against the spread of disease. If you decide not to vaccinate your child, you put your child at risk. Your child could catch a disease that is dangerous or deadly. Getting vaccinated is much better than getting the disease.

**Vaccines work.** They have kept children healthy and have saved millions of lives for more than 50 years. Most childhood vaccines are 90 to 99 percent effective in preventing disease. And if a vaccinated child does get the disease, the symptoms are usually less serious than in a child who has not been vaccinated.

**Vaccines are safe.** All vaccines used in the U.S. must be approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA will not let a vaccine be given unless it has been proven to be safe and to work well in children. The results are reviewed again by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Family Physicians before a vaccine is officially recommended to be given to children. Also, the FDA monitors where and how vaccines are made. The places where vaccines are made must be licensed. They are regularly inspected, and each vaccine lot is safety-tested.

## What if you don't immunize your child?

- Your child will be left at risk of catching the disease. Vaccines were developed to protect people from dangerous and often fatal diseases. Vaccines are safe and effective, and the vaccine-preventable diseases are still a threat.
- Your child will be an infectious disease threat to others. Children who are not vaccinated can readily transmit vaccine-preventable diseases to others in their community.
  - Unvaccinated children can pass diseases on to babies who are too young to be fully immunized.
  - Unvaccinated children pose a threat to children and adults who cannot be immunized for medical reasons. This includes people with leukemia and other cancers, immune system problems, and people receiving treatment or medications that suppress their immune system.
  - Unvaccinated children can infect the small percentage of children who cannot reach full protection from a vaccination due to medical reasons.
- Your child may have to be excluded from school or childcare. During disease outbreaks, unvaccinated children may be excluded from school or childcare until the outbreak is over. Excluding children from school or childcare is for their own protection and the protection of others. Outbreaks may last for several days to several weeks. Therefore, exclusion can be a hardship for the child and parent.

Your vaccination decision affects not only the health of your child, but also all of your family, your child's friends and their families, and your community.

For more information about vaccines, go to:

- Immunization Action Coalition at [www.immunize.org](http://www.immunize.org) and [www.vaccineinformation.org](http://www.vaccineinformation.org).
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines).
- American Academy of Pediatrics at [www.aap.org/immunization](http://www.aap.org/immunization).
- National Network for Immunization Information at [www.nni.org](http://www.nni.org).
- Vaccine Education Center at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia at [www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/home.html](http://www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/home.html).
- Vaccinate Your Family at <https://www.vaccinateyourfamily.org/>.



## Statement of Refusal to Vaccinate

Select the vaccine(s) that you **DO NOT** want your child to receive.

**DTaP (Diphtheria, Tetanus & Pertussis) vaccine**

I understand by not receiving the DTaP vaccine, the child listed here is at risk of a sore throat, fever, heart complications, feeding problems, paralysis, whooping cough, respiratory complications, coma, and death.

**Hib (*Haemophilus influenzae* Type b) vaccine**

I understand by not receiving the Hib vaccine, the child listed here is at risk of skin and throat infections, ear infections, meningitis, pneumonia, blood infections, arthritis, permanent brain damage, and death.

**Hepatitis A vaccine**

I understand by not receiving the Hepatitis A vaccine, the child listed here is at risk of yellow skin or eyes, "flu-like" illness, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea, joint pain, and/or life-long liver problems, such as scarring of the liver and cancer or the need for a liver transplant, and death.

**Hepatitis B vaccine**

I understand by not receiving the Hepatitis B vaccine, the child listed here is at risk of yellow skin or eyes, "flu-like" illness, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea, joint pain, and/or life-long liver problems, such as scarring of the liver and cancer or the need for a liver transplant, and death.

**MMR (Measles, Mumps & Rubella) vaccine**

I understand by not receiving the MMR vaccine, the child listed here is at risk of a rash, fever, cough, diarrhea, muscle aches, ear infections, pneumonia, headaches, seizures, meningitis, brain infections, inflammation of the testicles and ovaries, sterility, arthritis, inflammation of the pancreas, permanent deafness, brain damage, and death. Birth defects if acquired while pregnant include deafness, cataracts, heart defects, mental retardation, and liver and spleen damage in the baby.

**Meningococcal (MCV4) vaccine**

I understand by not receiving the Meningococcal vaccine, the child listed here is at risk of meningitis, which is a severe infection of the covering of the brain and the spinal cord. The child is also at risk of blood infections, problems with their nervous system, loss of arms or legs, permanent deafness, suffer from strokes or seizures, and death.

**Pneumococcal vaccine**

I understand by not receiving the Pneumococcal vaccine, the child listed here is at risk of severe disease including meningitis, which is a severe infection of the covering of the brain and the spinal cord. The child is also at risk of blood infections, pneumonia, permanent deafness, brain damage, and death.

**Polio vaccine**

I understand by not receiving the Polio vaccine, the child listed here is at risk of a fever, sore throat, nausea, headaches, stomachaches, stiffness, paralysis that can lead to permanent disability, and death.

**Td (Tetanus, Diphtheria) vaccine**

I understand by not receiving the Td vaccine, the child listed here is at risk of seizures, serious neuromuscular disease, heart problems, and death.

**Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis) vaccine**

I understand by not receiving the Tdap vaccine, the child listed here is at risk of pneumonia, whooping cough, seizures, inflammation of the brain, serious neurological complications, and death.

**Varicella (Chickenpox) vaccine**

I understand by not receiving the Varicella vaccine, the child listed here is at risk of a rash, fever, severe skin infections, scars, pneumonia, seizures, brain infection, and death.

I have decided to decline the required vaccine(s) as indicated above, and I have checked the appropriate box(es) for the vaccine(s) I want to decline.

I understand that if my child is exposed to a vaccine-preventable disease for which I have chosen an exemption, he or she should expect to be excluded from childcare or school for 21 days or longer as determined by the Arkansas Department of Health. This is for the protection of the exempted child and the protection of others.

I understand that I may reconsider and accept vaccination for my child at any time in the future.

Under penalty of law, I affirm that I received and reviewed the entire application packet, including the Vaccine Information Statements from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regarding the risks associated with my child not being vaccinated as stated in this information and that I still request an exemption from the vaccine(s).

Release of information will be provided only to the custodial parent/guardian who completes this application and according to the notarized signature.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
*Parent/Guardian*

## Notary Public

State of \_\_\_\_\_ County of \_\_\_\_\_

On this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_, before me personally appeared. \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian

known to me (or satisfactorily proven) to be the person whose name is subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged that he/she executed the same for the purposes therein contained.

In witness whereof, I hereunto set my hand and official seal.



Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
*Notary Public*

My Commission Expires: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please Return Application: CHOOSE ONE METHOD ONLY**

**MAIL to: Arkansas Department of Health**

**ATTN: Exemptions**

**4815 West Markham, Mail Slot #48**

**Little Rock, AR 72205**

**EMAIL to: [Immunization.Section@arkansas.gov](mailto:Immunization.Section@arkansas.gov)**

**FAX to: (501)661-2300**