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DOH URGES PARENTS OF SEVENTH-GRADE STUDENTS TO SCHEDULE CHECKUP VISITS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) is encouraging parents of students who will be entering seventh grade this coming school year to schedule a checkup and stay current with immunizations.

Children undergo significant physical, emotional and social change as they approach adolescence. Ensuring their health and well-being through a well-child visit that includes a comprehensive physical exam is important.

Well-child visits allow health care providers to monitor a child's growth and development while addressing physical activity, nutrition, health concerns and mental well-being. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children and youth have a well-child visit with their health care provider at least once a year.

During the well-child visit, your provider will assess if your incoming seventh grader is due for vaccines. Staying up to date with vaccinations safeguards your child and helps prevent disease outbreaks in our schools, contributing to overall community health. Vaccines prepare children's immune systems to recognize and resist contagious diseases, keeping them healthy so they and their classmates can continue growing, learning and thriving.

Hawai'i law requires all students to submit official documentation to their school indicating that they have undergone a physical exam before the first day of school and have received the required vaccinations, unless the student has an approved exemption.

Before the first day of the 2026-2027 school year, all seventh-grade students must provide official documentation of having received the following vaccines:

- Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis vaccine (Tdap)
- Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV)
- Human papillomavirus vaccine (HPV)

These vaccines protect children from the effects of these diseases:

Tetanus

Tetanus enters the body through cuts or wounds. It causes painful stiffening of the muscles. Tetanus can lead to serious health problems, including being unable to open the mouth, having trouble swallowing and breathing, or death. The most recent case of tetanus in Hawai'i was reported in 2019.

Diphtheria

Diphtheria is spread from person to person through direct contact with respiratory body fluids. Diphtheria can lead to difficulty breathing, heart failure, paralysis, or death. While no cases of diphtheria have been reported in Hawai'i in the past 10 years, cases have recently increased in Europe and Africa.

Pertussis

Pertussis, also known as "whooping cough," is a respiratory illness spread easily from person to person through the air. It can cause uncontrollable, violent coughing that makes it hard to breathe, eat, or drink. Over the past three years, the number of pertussis cases in Hawai'i has continued to rise. In 2023, there were three cases; in 2024, there were 95 cases and last year in 2025, there were 252 cases.

Meningococcus

Meningococcus is a bacteria spread through direct contact with respiratory body fluids that can cause an infection of the blood, or meningitis. While infection is rare, risk of infection is greater in group settings such as college dorms and with certain international travel. One case was reported last year in Hawai'i. Infection can quickly cause serious complications including death. While most recover, up to one in five of those infected develop permanent disabilities. The first dose of a preventive vaccine should be received at age 11 or 12, with a second dose at age 16. Many colleges require vaccination.

Human Papillomavirus

Two of the most transmissible human papillomavirus (HPV) strains, spread through direct skin to skin contact, are also the most likely to cause cancer of the mouth, throat, cervix and other areas of the body. Vaccination can prevent these and other HPV strains. Eighty-five percent of people who are not vaccinated will get a strain(s) of HPV at some point in their lives. You must get vaccinated before exposure to protect yourself against cancers caused by HPV, even if the exposure is decades in the future. Children should get two doses of HPV vaccine between the ages of 9 and 12.

Children new to Hawai'i schools must also complete a tuberculosis (TB) clearance form with their health care provider.

Please contact your child's healthcare provider for more information or to schedule an appointment.

The AAP Recommended Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule for Ages 18 Years and Younger is available at <https://www.aap.org/ImmunizationSchedule>.

For more information about Hawai'i's school health requirements, visit www.VaxToSchoolHawaii.com.

Media Resources:

An interview with Dr. Jennifer Mbutia, a Physician Consultant for the DOH Immunization branch, can be [downloaded here](#).

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