

# Keep our students and classrooms healthy!

## Dear Parents or Guardians,

Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, is a bacterial infection that can easily spread causing severe coughing fits and missed days of school.

Meningococcal disease is a serious bacterial illness that affects the brain and the spinal cord. Meningitis can cause shock, coma, and death within hours of the first symptoms.

To help protect your children and others from whooping cough and meningitis, Georgia law requires students to be vaccinated against both diseases.

**Before starting the school year, all incoming 7<sup>th</sup> grade students** will need proof of a whooping cough booster shot and a meningococcal shot unless the child has an exemption.

If your preteen has not been vaccinated against whooping cough or meningococcal disease, we strongly recommend getting your child vaccinated. Getting Tdap (the tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis shot) and MCV4 (meningococcal conjugate vaccine) now will not only help protect your child against the ongoing threat of whooping cough and meningitis but will also meet the school entry requirement.

Ask your pediatrician or local health department about other shots your child may need including:

- the human papillomavirus (HPV) 3-shot series
- an annual flu vaccine; and
- catch-up immunizations, including chickenpox, MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) and hepatitis B.

Proof of both vaccinations must be documented on the Georgia Immunization Certificate (Form 3231)

If your child does not have health insurance or their health plan won't cover these vaccines, call your local health department and ask about getting no or low cost vaccines. For more information, visit <http://dph.georgia.gov/vaccines-children> or call (800)-848-3868.



## Help Your Preteen Relax During Shots

### Encourage your preteen to:

- Bring along his/her favorite music
- Remember to breathe—take slow, deep breaths
- Stay seated if he/she feels dizzy or anxious
- Make eye contact with you or focus on something in the room, like a poster
- Close his/her eyes and think of a favorite place or activity
- Think about where to go after the appointment for a reward