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**Attention Parents!  
New Tdap vaccination requirement for students**

Winnebago County Health Department – For School Year 2012-2013, all students entering sixth and ninth grades will be required to provide proof of a dose of the whooping cough (Tdap) vaccination in addition to the school physicals required at these grades.

Numerous outbreaks of pertussis (whooping cough) have occurred recently among school children in Illinois. Pertussis is easily transmitted through coughing and sneezing and may cause illness that persists for weeks to months. Pertussis does not typically cause severe illness in healthy students, but can prolong absences from school and extracurricular activities. In addition, pertussis can be transmitted from healthy students to infants and individuals with chronic illnesses, for whom pertussis can be life threatening.

Protection against pertussis begins to decrease over time. This puts pre-teens, teenagers and adults at risk for the illness. To address this increase in pertussis disease among older students, one dose of a booster vaccination (called Tdap containing tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis) is required for all students in grades six and nine. However, all students in grades six through twelve should have a record of a dose of Tdap for their own protection.

“It’s not too early to protect your child and prepare for the new school year “said Mary Weyand, RN, Family Health Supervisor for the Winnebago County Health Department. “As we are approaching the end of this school year, I encourage parents to schedule those appointments for the sixth and ninth grade physicals and shots. You will be taking steps to keep them healthy and at the same time meeting the school entry requirements.” Some other immunizations that are now also recommended for this age group, include the meningococcal vaccine, a second chickenpox shot (if they never had chickenpox disease), and the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine series. During flu season, it is also recommended that everyone older than 6 months receive a seasonal flu vaccine.

If a child is on Medicaid, does not have health insurance, or their health insurance doesn’t cover the cost of vaccines, participating physicians or the Winnebago County Health Department can provide needed vaccinations through the Vaccines for Children Program (VFC).

“Protecting the health of our youth is one of our most vital priorities,” said Mike Bacon, Winnebago County Health Department Public Health Administrator. “The best way to achieve this is by taking advantage of the health protection benefits of age-appropriate immunizations.”

For more information on the new Tdap vaccination requirement, please visit [www.wchd.org](http://www.wchd.org) or call the Winnebago County Health Department at either 815-720-4370 or 815-720-4000.

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***Service Locations***

401 Division St. Rockford, IL 61104-2014 (815)720-4000  
555 North Court St. Rockford, IL 61103-6862 (815)720-4000  
330 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue Rockford, IL 61104-5155 (815) 972-7200

Mailing address for all locations: 401 Division St. P.O. Box 4009 Rockford, IL 61110-0509

[www.wchd.org](http://www.wchd.org)

