

1. What is the mission of the New Jersey Coalition for Vaccination Choice (NJCVC)?

The primary objective of the New Jersey Coalition for Vaccination Choice (NJCVC) is for the NJ legislature to pass bill A260/S1071, Conscientious Exemption to Mandatory Vaccination, into law. If passed, New Jersey would become one of 20 states to allow vaccination choice by providing parents with the right to a conscientious or philosophical vaccination exemption. NJCVC believes vaccine mandates are unethical and supports parents' rights to informed consent regarding vaccination. Informed consent requires that a parent/guardian be provided full disclosure of all information including vaccine ingredients, warnings, contraindications and possible adverse reactions resulting from administration as listed by the vaccine manufacturers and the Physician's Desk Reference, (PDR).

2. Are vaccines required for children to attend school and daycare in New Jersey?

New Jersey has mandatory vaccination regulations, however, a child can attend public or most private schools with select or no vaccines if the parent/guardian provides a valid medical or religious exemption letter to the school administrator. Private and religiously affiliated schools have now been directed by the NJ Dept. of Health to accept religious vaccine exemptions. NJ does not currently allow parents to use a conscientious/philosophical vaccine exemption, which would change if bill A260/S1071 passes into law.

3. Which vaccines are mandated in New Jersey for school and daycare attendance?

You may visit the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services website for detailed information on vaccination mandates. This information is contained under the MINIMAL IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN NEW JERSEY: <http://www.state.nj.us/health/forms/imm-7.pdf>. For a summary of the newest mandates and reasons that NJCVC opposes their mandatory status, visit: <http://www.njvaccinationchoice.org/whyweare.html>

4. Does my child qualify for a medical exemption?

A medical exemption letter must be written by a licensed physician in New Jersey. Medical exemptions would apply to individuals who are allergic to any components of the vaccines, those who have had severe reactions in the past and to those individuals with a family history of allergies. Also, some immunocompromised individuals taking specific medications should not receive certain vaccines. Siblings' adverse reactions do not automatically exempt a child although should be thoroughly considered prior to vaccination. Medical contraindications to vaccines are listed in the manufacturer's package insert and the Physicians Desk Reference, yet guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics and/or Centers for Disease Control usually define the medical condition/status that is acceptable for a medical exemption. Please visit our website for further details:

<http://njvaccinechoice.org/homework.html#docs>. A medical exemption must be renewed annually, and even if written by a licensed physician, the local Board of Health has the right to reject the exemption.

5. Does my child qualify for a religious exemption and how do I claim this?

In order to qualify for a religious exemption, you must have sincere religious beliefs that prohibit vaccination. A valid religious exemption letter is also required to legally exempt a child from mandated vaccines. A parent/guardian must write the letter and should include the NJ state law that defines the right to a religious exemption and include an explanation as to why the practice of vaccination conflicts with your religious beliefs/ tenets. You are not obligated to disclose your religion to obtain a religious exemption. In the recent past, school officials have erroneously requested letters from clergy or they have questioned a parent's religion, as well as other discriminatory practices. According to a Dec. 1, 2008 memo by the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services, school administrators were specifically instructed to avoid such practices. The memo itself can be accessed here:

<http://njvaccinationchoice.org/fromnj.html>

6. I am opposed to vaccinations for reasons other than religion. What kind of exemption can I file so my child can attend school?

Currently the state of New Jersey will only accept one of two vaccine exemptions: medical or religious. If your child has a medical condition which warrants a medical exemption, you can request a letter from your licensed physician. Religious exemptions are available to those who believe that vaccinations conflict with their religious beliefs/tenets. If you do not provide a medical or religious exemption, or vaccinate your child with the state-mandated vaccines, your school administrator will be required to expel your child from school. If the philosophical/conscientious belief exemption bill (A260/S1071) passes in NJ, parents will have the right to choose select or no vaccines for their children to attend school.

7. I am atheist or agnostic. What exemption is available to my family?

There is no provision in the current law for individuals who wish to be exempt from vaccination for reasons other than religious or medical. NJ's current exemptions are in violation of New Jersey law against discrimination since agnostics, atheists, and even vegetarians do not have equal protection under the law to file exemptions. The conscientious exemption bill will correct this violation.

8. I cannot locate a thimerosal-free flu shot for my child. Any suggestions?

The NJ Department of Health and Senior Services has stated that it does not regulate or control the state's vaccine supply. It is therefore a parent/guardian's choice and responsibility to locate a thimerosal-free version of the flu shot, or other mandated vaccine for their child(ren). Vaccine compliance is expected for school attendance, regardless of availability.

9. What happens in the 2008-2009 flu season if my preschooler (less than 59 months) does not have his flu shot?

According to state law, if your child is expected to have one of the following: all mandated vaccines, or a religious/medical exemption. In early February 2009, however, the NJ Dept. of Health extended the flu shot deadline indefinitely for compliance in order to attend daycare or preschool, citing shortages around NJ.

10. Now that I've started to vaccinate my child(ren), am I required to continue?

You always have the right to consider what is best for your child(ren). If you choose to discontinue or delay vaccinating, however, your child is still expected to receive all state mandated vaccinations to enter school unless you claim a medical or a religious exemption

11. How do I know if my child has an egg allergy and may react to a vaccine?

Flu vaccines, as well as other vaccines, are grown on egg embryos and usually contain egg and other foreign proteins. If you are not certain if your child has an egg allergy and you would like to continue vaccinating, you should consult an allergy specialist who may provide a blood or skin prick test to determine if he/she may have a reaction. Laboratory-confirmed egg allergies are a contraindication to receiving egg-containing vaccines such as influenza and varicella. The risk is anaphylaxis. For a list of vaccine ingredients, click here:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/downloads/appendices/B/excipient-table-2.pdf>

12. I believe my child has had a vaccine reaction, but my doctor says not to worry about it or that it is unrelated to the vaccines. What can I do?

If your child has had an adverse reaction to a vaccine, or combination of vaccines (you may review the manufacturers' package inserts online or the Physicians Desk Reference for more details), your doctor is required by law to report the adverse events to federal health authorities within 30 days of occurrence. If your doctor refuses, you have the right to submit your own report. Even common, mild side effects should be reported to the federal vaccine tracking database. Click here to access details on filing a report with VAERS, Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System: <https://secure.vaers.org/VaersDataEntryintro.htm>.

13. What is the status of NJ's conscientious exemption bill and how can I help to make it a law in NJ?

Our Coalition encourages everyone to get involved and help to pass bill A260/S1071. It is important for EVERYONE to call and write letters to your district's legislators. If your assemblyperson/senator is currently sponsoring bill A260/S1071, then please thank him/her; if not, send a letter explaining why they should sponsor the bill. For details of what to do and where to call refer to: <http://www.njvaccinationchoice.org/action.html>. The reason this bill is not being voted on in the legislature is because the health committees of the Senate and Assembly have not allowed it to come up for a vote. Your continuous calls and letters to YOUR own legislators are needed to pass this bill.

Thank you for your support of the NJ Coalition for Vaccination Choice. If you have additional questions, please feel free to send them to:

info@njvaccinationchoice.org