

Tips for Locating Old Immunization Records

Immunization records often are needed for entry into childcare, schools, camps, and new jobs, as well as travel abroad. If you are seeing a new healthcare provider, you will need this information to ensure you receive proper medical care. Providers usually count only those vaccine doses that are documented in a written record or a state or local immunization information system (known as an "IIS," or registry). No national registry maintains this information. So, if immunization records are lost or not available, you or your child may need to repeat vaccine doses. Here are some ideas that might help you piece together old immunization records.

PLACES YOU MAY WANT TO CHECK:

- **All previous healthcare providers** – Don't forget vaccination visits you made to local public health departments, clinics, or pharmacies. When physicians retire or a medical practice changes hands, old patient records are required to be preserved for some period of time, which varies by federal or state requirements and patient age. A new record custodian (a succeeding physician or a medical record storage company) is assigned. If you do not have any information from the closed practice, you may contact the state health department or medical board for information about where records from the closed practice were sent. You may be able to obtain records from the new custodian for a fee.
- **Your home** – Look through your old papers, including baby books and school or camp forms. If you're an adult, ask your parents if they still have your childhood records.
- **State or local IIS (or registry)** – All states and some cities have centralized registries of vaccine records. These may not include all ages or all records, but this is a good place to check. Some IIS have consumer portals for members of the general public to access their own records. Check with your state or local health department to see if this is an option in your state. CDC provides detailed contact information for IIS in each state at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/iis/contacts-locate-records.html.
- **Schools and colleges or other post-secondary institutions** you or your child attended.
- **Previous employers**, including the military.
- To get the phone number of your local health department, call the CDC Information Contact Center at 800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) or visit the CDC online health department directory at www.cdc.gov/infrastructure/contact/index.html.

WHEN YOU FIND YOUR RECORDS

Congratulations! Now you should take the records to your provider or local public health clinic and ask them to document this information on an official record, and, if possible, in the state or local immunization registry. Many schools, camps, etc., will accept only this type of "provider-verified" record because this ensures the information has been reviewed and affirmed by a medical professional. **Be sure to keep a copy with your home records and place all your supporting documentation in a safe place where you can find it. It is a good idea to take a picture of records with a smartphone or scan and save a copy electronically.**

WHAT IF YOU DON'T FIND YOUR RECORDS?

If records are lost, both children and adults may need to repeat some vaccines. Although this is time-consuming and inconvenient, it is not harmful to receive additional vaccine doses. Blood tests may help determine if you're already immune to certain diseases. Your healthcare provider can help you develop a plan.

FOR THE FUTURE...

- To avoid hunting for old records and repeating doses, keep a personal record of your child's immunizations and bring it to each healthcare visit so it can be referenced and updated as needed.
- Keep all paper vaccine records in your wallet, a vinyl sleeve, or a sealable plastic bag.
- Keep a back-up copy with your important records, including an electronic copy or backed up to the cloud, if possible.
- Make sure all vaccines you are given are documented in your record or a supplemental record.
- Ask that your vaccines also be documented in your state or local immunization registry.

Remember, you need to rely on **you** to keep these records. This will help you save time, reduce hassles, and be ready to provide your immunization history whenever it's needed in the future!

