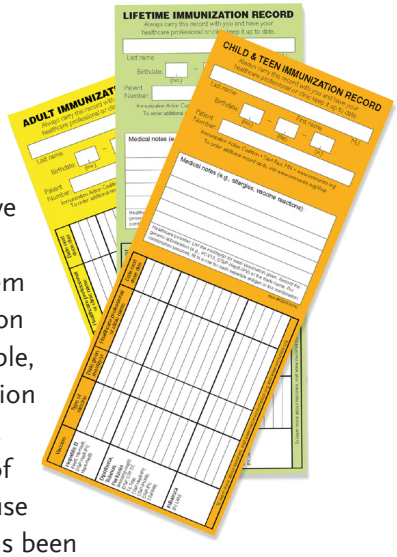
Tips for Locating Old Immunization Records

Immunization records often are needed for entry into child-care, kindergarten, school, summer camp, and college or other post-high school training, as well as for future employment and international travel. 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 on a written record or are available on a local computerized immunization information system (registry). Unfortunately, no national organization maintains this information. So, if immunization records are lost or not available, you or your child may have to repeat vaccine doses. Piecing together old immunization information can be difficult and time consuming. Here are some ideas that might help you reconstruct this information.

PLACES YOU MAY WANT TO CHECK:

- **All previous healthcare providers** – Don't forget vaccination visits you made to local public health departments or neighborhood clinics. Sometimes when physicians retire or a medical practice changes hands, old patient records are sent to a medical record storage company. You may be able to obtain records directly from the company, but you may have to pay a fee.
- **Your home** – Look through your old papers, including baby books and school or camp forms. If you're an adult, don't forget to ask your mother or father if they still have your childhood records.
- **Schools and colleges or other post-secondary institutions** you or your child attended.
- **Previous employers**, including the military.
- **Local immunization registry** – All states and some cities have centralized registries of vaccines given by local providers. A registry may not include all ages and may not have all records, but this still can be a great place to check. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has a listing of registry contacts and websites at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/iis/contacts-locate-records.html. Or to find the phone number of your local health department, call the CDC Information Contact Center at 800-CDC-INFO (232-4636).

WHEN YOU FIND YOUR RECORDS



Congratulations! Now you should take the records you have found 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 evaluated and corroborated by a medical professional. But if you're unable to visit your provider or clinic, your next best option is to consolidate this information on an immunization record card, available through your state health department or at www.immunize.org/recordcards. You should document the name of the vaccine, the date it was given, the name of the provider or clinic that administered it, and any additional information found on the record. **Be sure to place all your supporting documentation in a safe place where you can find it.**

WHAT IF YOU DON'T FIND YOUR RECORDS?

In general, both children and adults will need to repeat some vaccines. Although this is time-consuming and inconvenient, it is not harmful to receive additional vaccine doses. For a few vaccines, blood tests can help determine if you're already immune to certain diseases. Your healthcare provider can help you determine exactly what's best for you.

FOR THE FUTURE...

To avoid hunting for old records and possibly repeating undocumented vaccinations, remember to bring your or your child's immunization record card to EVERY medical appointment. Keep your personal record in your wallet, a vinyl sleeve, or a Ziploc bag. It is also a good idea to keep a back-up copy where you store your important papers. Make sure all vaccines you are given are documented on this card 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!

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www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3065.pdf • Item #P3065 (5/15)