

Arkansas Pharmacy Immunization Regulatory Updates

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Arkansas pharmacists have the authority to prescribe immunizations.

Due to recent legislation (Acts 406 and 407 of 2021), Arkansas pharmacists now have the authority to prescribe vaccines and delegate vaccine administration to appropriately trained pharmacy technicians. Pharmacists can prescribe and administer all CDC recommended vaccines to patients 7 and older. Pharmacists can also prescribe and administer immunizations to patients ages 3 years and older. However, additional rules must be followed when administering vaccines (other than influenza and COVID-19) to the 3 to 6-year-old age range. With increased scope of practice comes an increased responsibility to stay up to date with current vaccine regulations, guidelines, and recommendations.

Disclaimer: This article is based on current Arkansas Pharmacy Laws and not the PREP Act. The new Arkansas Pharmacy Laws are very similar to the PREP Act, but the PREP Act will be ending. The Arkansas Pharmacy Laws will remain.

What You Need to Know

- **Pharmacies no longer need an immunization protocol with a physician to administer vaccines.**
 - As an Arkansas pharmacist, you now have full authority to prescribe and administer vaccines.
 - Previously, Arkansas Pharmacy Law required a written “Authority to Administer” protocol with a practitioner for pharmacists to administer immunizations. The prescriptions were written under the name of the practitioner on the protocol.
 - Now, there is no need for a written protocol with another practitioner. You write the prescriptions using yourself as the prescriber.
- **Pharmacists are the prescribers for vaccines they administer.**
 - Each individual pharmacist needs their own National Provider Identifier (NPI) number.
 - To register for an NPI number, visit this website: <https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov/#/>
 - Arkansas Medicaid now recognizes pharmacists as providers. This is a much needed first step to be compensated for services we currently provide as pharmacists. You must enroll with Arkansas Medicaid as an individual provider to reap the benefits of this recognition.
 - To start the enrollment process, please visit the Arkansas Medicaid website at humanservices.arkansas.gov. Under the Divisions & Shared Services tab, click Medical Services and Provider Enrollment. There, you will see a link to Start Your Application.
- **Pharmacists can vaccinate ages 3 and older, with a few extra rules for the 3 to 6-year-olds.**
 - Arkansas pharmacists can vaccinate ages 3 and older for flu and COVID-19 without any restrictions.
 - To administer *any other* vaccine for 3 to 6-year-olds, a pharmacy must:
 - Be a Vaccines for Children (VFC) provider
AND
 - Inform the caregiver of the patient of the importance of a yearly well-child visit with their pediatrician or primary care provider
 - This rule is to help ensure that children are still getting the routine care they need from a physician, even if they receive their vaccines in a pharmacy. Vaccinations are important, but other routine care is also important.
- **Pharmacists can delegate vaccine administration to appropriately trained pharmacy technicians.**
 - For a pharmacy technician to administer vaccines, a technician is expected to complete an immunization training program that is approved by the AR State Board of Pharmacy. The training must include an assessment of hands-on injection technique.
 - The APA currently offers a Pharmacy Technician Immunization Training program that meets these requirements.

- For more information about the APA Technician Immunization Training program, visit <https://apa.memberclicks.net/technician-immunization-training>
- Of note, appropriately trained pharmacy technicians may only administer immunizations if a pharmacist delegates them to do so. No other injectable products may be administered by technicians.

Continuing Education Update

Continuing Education (CE) on immunizations is no longer a requirement by the AR State Board of Pharmacy for pharmacists or technicians for license renewal. If you have met the initial immunization training requirements to administer vaccines, you may continue administering vaccines after renewing your Arkansas Pharmacist or Technician License. It is certainly best practice to stay up to date on immunizations, but immunization-specific CE is no longer a requirement to renew your license or to continue administering vaccines after license renewal.

Vaccine Recommendations

Pharmacists are expected to follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) when prescribing and administering vaccines. Please use the immunization schedules published by the CDC to prescribe and administer vaccines.

Each year, CDC will publish vaccine schedules for children (birth – 18 years) and adults (19 years and older). The annually published vaccine schedules are meant to provide guidance for vaccine providers to more easily implement and administer vaccines. More in-depth guidance for each vaccine is also available on the CDC's website.

CDC Immunization Schedules for Healthcare Providers

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/index.html>

