

Frequently Asked Questions: The Wisconsin Immunization Registry (WIR)

1. What is the WIR?

The Wisconsin Immunization Registry is an Internet database that records immunization dates of Wisconsin's children and adults, keeping everyone on track for their recommended immunizations. Wisconsin began using this database in May 2000, but information on births since January 1995 were entered in the database and continues to be updated on a weekly basis. The WIR is managed by the Department of Health and Family Services.

2. Why should my child(ren)/I participate in the WIR?

A top priority of the WIR is to reduce or stop the number of vaccine-preventable diseases that affect children in our state. Children under two years old are especially vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases and should receive most of their vaccinations before their second birthday. The proper use of immunizations is one way we can keep everyone in Wisconsin safer and healthier.

3. Is the WIR for everyone, children and adults?

Since 2000, every child born in the State of Wisconsin has been enrolled in the registry using information from the child's birth certificate, unless the child's legal guardian requests not to be enrolled. Wisconsin has two forms, *Birth Certificate Application* and the *Facts About Your Child's Birth Certificate*, which allow the legal guardian to "opt-out" of the registry.

Anyone born before 2000 can have their immunization records sent to the WIR, but they should not be sent unless the patient has had the opportunity to "opt-out." Ask your health care provider if you would like to know more about opting-out of the registry.

4. What is the WIR used for?

The WIR is only used for:

- a. Providing immunization services for your provider, school, etc. such as letting them know of any recalls or reminders
- b. Allowing schools to check immunization status on their students
- c. Creating non-identifying statistical immunization information
- d. Allowing providers to see up-to-date immunization information on their patients
- e. Reducing the amount of duplicate immunizations given to patients

5. What information is displayed on the WIR?

The following information can be found in the WIR:

- a. Immunization information, including vaccine, vaccine lot number, vaccine date, vaccination history and whether or not the patient is up-to-date on immunizations
- b. Patient information such as the patient's name, sex, date of birth, mother's maiden name, address and telephone number. Please note that your social security number *is not* included in the patient information.

6. Who can view the immunization records on WIR?

There are five different groups of people who view information on the WIR:

- a. Immunization Providers (doctors, nurses, etc.)*
- b. Health Management Organizations*
- c. Schools*
- d. Department of Health and Family Services/Health Care Agents*
- e. Other agencies, including nursing homes, Head Start, or foster placement agencies*

**By Wisconsin and federal law, the above groups are allowed to view a patient's immunization information without the patient's permission. This applies whether or not the patient's immunization records are located in the WIR.*

7. What Wisconsin Laws support WIR?

According to Wisconsin law,

- a. The government has the power to do what is necessary to prevent, contain, and closely watch disease
- b. The government has the power to create a statewide immunization program
- c. The Wisconsin health department needs to maintain a public health database

8. Can I access my/my child's immunization records in the WIR?

Yes, you can access the WIR and immunization records through a PC with an Internet connection. Ask your provider to set up access for you, supply your social security number to your provider, then visit <http://dhfsWIR.org> for more information. To access your/your child's information, you need a first and last name, date of birth, social security number or Medicaid ID.

9. To access the WIR, I needed to provide a social security number to the provider/WIR. Will my/my child's social security number be in the registry? How will my/my child's social security number be used?

The social security number is needed only to give you access to the immunization records in the WIR. When entering the social security number to get into the secure website, the number is "blinded" and not viewable to anyone. The social security number is not visible to anybody who uses the registry.

10. How secure is the WIR site?

WIR has several security features built into its system to ensure the confidentiality of your information. WIR uses data encryption for all data going to and from the WIR. For more information, please visit <http://dhfsWIR.org>

Providers, schools, or other professionals who are inputting or viewing your information need to agree to the terms in the *WIR User Security and Confidentiality Agreement*.

11. Can I prevent my/my child's health care provider(s) from sending immunization records?

Yes, you can prevent your health care provider(s) from sending immunization records in two separate ways:

- a. Notify your health care provider that you do not want your/your child's immunization records sent (ie, you are choosing to "opt-out").
- b. Notify the WIR that you do not want your/your child's immunizations included in the registry. You can also complete the State's form *Wisconsin Immunization Registry Exclusion*. This method is best if you visit multiple providers in the State of Wisconsin. WIR will block any health care provider from sending your immunization records to the registry.

12. Can I prevent the release of immunization records to anyone?

You can choose to opt-out of the WIR, but you cannot choose to prevent the release of your immunization records. In fact, some authorized individuals can request your immunization records without your knowledge or consent, such as schools or other providers. See Question #6 for more information.

13. What if I decided in the past to opt-out of the WIR, and now I would like to be included?/ What if I decided to be part of the WIR, but now I would like to opt-out?

You can always change your mind of whether or not you would like your immunization records to be sent to the WIR.

- a. If you have opted-out in the past and have chosen to opt-in, you can provide a personal record of your immunizations and we would be happy to enter those in the WIR for you.
- b. If you have chosen to have your immunization records sent to the WIR but then decide to opt-out, we can stop sending them. Keep in mind however that this does not apply to any immunization records that have already been sent to the WIR.

14. As a child, my parents wanted my immunization records sent to the WIR. Now that I'm over 18, I don't want my immunization records sent. Can I stop my records from being sent?

You can change your mind at any time. Please see Question #13 for additional information.

15. Will the WIR receive the immunization records as soon as I/my child receives the immunization, or is there a delay?

ProHealth Care Medical Associates' (PHCMA) goal is to be very timely in entering immunizations, however there may be a delay for up to two weeks from the time you have received your immunization to the time it is entered in the WIR. We understand the need to have the most up-to-date information in the WIR.

16. What if I/my child receive immunizations at another facility? How can I guarantee that the information is/ is not being sent to the WIR?

If you/your child receive immunizations at another facility other than ProHealth Care Medical Associates, it would be beneficial to ask the provider whether or not the immunizations will be included in the registry. See Question #3 for more information.

17. What if I have a complete record of my/my child's immunizations and I want to submit them to the WIR?

If your/your child's immunization records are not currently in the WIR, you can provide a history of the immunizations to your provider and they would be happy to enter that information into the WIR for you. If you are unsure of which immunizations (if any) are in the WIR database, you can always check the database yourself through obtaining access. See Question #8 for more detail.

18. What if I move to another state? Are my immunization records in the WIR transferable?

The Wisconsin Immunization Registry is specifically for the state of Wisconsin. However, many other states have a similar initiative. Discuss your question with your new provider to find out if the new state has a database similar to WIR and if the data is transferable.

19. What if I adopt a child from another country? Can their immunization records get transferred to the WIR?

If a child enters the State of Wisconsin and you have their immunization records, you can have their immunization records sent to the WIR. Give a copy of the records to your provider and request the immunizations to be sent to the WIR.

20. Do other states have a similar initiative like the WIR?

Nationwide, immunization programs are held accountable to reach state and federal immunization goals and outcomes. See <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/immunization> for additional information.

21. Is there a form I need to fill out at ProHealth Care Medical Associates (PHCMA) to participate in the WIR?

You can fill out the PHCMA Wisconsin Immunization Registry form to do one of three things:

- a. Request to view the WIR database through providing your social security number
- b. "Opt-Out" to have your immunization records excluded from the WIR
- c. "Opt Back In" to withdraw your previous opt-out request

At PHCMA, you do not need to do anything if you would like to participate in the WIR.

22. Who can I talk to at PHCMA to find out more information?

You can discuss any questions or concerns with your provider or any health care staff member.

23. Why is PHCMA participating in this? Does every clinic/hospital in Wisconsin participate?

PHCMA recognizes the importance of immunizations and our state's initiative. Other Wisconsin clinics and hospitals are also encouraged to participate in the WIR.

24. How can I contact the WIR?

You can contact the WIR Helpdesk through the following:

Phone - (608) 266-9691

Email - wirhelp@dhfs.state.wi.us

Fax - (608) 267-9493

Resources

Wisconsin Immunization Registry (WIR) Security and Confidentiality Agreement

PHCMA Wisconsin Immunization Registry Form (F01761 R12/08)

Wisconsin Chapters 144, 250.04, and 252.04

Wisconsin Immunization Registry, <https://www.dhfwir.org>

Wisconsin Immunization Registry Brochure, Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services

Wisconsin Immunization Program, Wisconsin Department of Health Services,

<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/immunization>