



VACCINATION REQUIREMENTS FOR FINAL GREEN CARD PROCESSING

Applicants for Final Green Card Processing are required to meet a health standard¹ verified by a civil surgeon (USCIS/Consulate-approved doctor), and must also prove they have been vaccinated against specified vaccine-preventable diseases² including:

- **mumps** (swollen glands near the ears)
- **measles** (rash with red spots on the skin, accompanied by fever, swelling, other symptoms)
- **rubella** (German measles)
- **polio** (infectious viral disease of the spinal cord)
- **tetanus** (infection from an externally caused wound)
- **diphtheria** (sore throat with fever and an adherent membrane of the tonsils, pharynx, or nose)
- **pertussis** influenza type B (whooping cough)
- **haemophilus influenza type B** (infection of the protective membranes surrounding the brain)
- **hepatitis B** (liver disease caused by hepatitis B virus)
- **varicella** (chicken pox)
- **pneumococcal diseases** (caused by the bacteria *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, the term includes pneumonia, bacteremia, and meningitis).

To prove both the health and vaccination criteria, the U.S. Government requires that an application for final green card processing include a medical examination and vaccination supplement to be filled out by the civil surgeon. For Adjustment of Status applicants, we provide clients with a list of USCIS-approved doctors. For Consular Processing applicants, a list of consulate-approved doctors in the applicant's home country will be forwarded by the U.S. Consulate.

If the applicant cannot prove that these vaccinations have already been received through medical records or that he or she is immune to the disease, the vaccinations may be administered at the time of the basic medical exam -- unless the doctor grants a waiver.² Waivers may be given when vaccinations are not medically appropriate (contraindicated due to allergies, pregnancy, etc.), or not feasible (inability to complete a series of treatments in a timely fashion). If vaccinations are in general conflict with the applicant's religious beliefs, Form I-601, *Application for Waiver of Ground of Excludability*, must be filed with the appropriate fee to request waiver. Requesting a waiver requires good documentation and will slow down the process.

¹ The health-related grounds of inadmissibility are set forth at INA § 212(a)(1)(A)(i-iv). Aside from the vaccination requirements, a person may be deemed inadmissible if possessing a physical or mental disorder and the behavior associated with the disorder may pose, or has posed, a threat to the property, safety, or welfare of self or others; exhibits behavior likely to recur or to lead to other harmful behavior; or is determined in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Health and Human Services to be a drug abuser or addict. See also INA § 212(a)(4) regarding the interrelated public charge issue.

² Waiver options are listed at INA § 212(g)(2)(A-C). Additionally, certain groups are exempt from the vaccination requirement, including internationally adopted children ten years of age or younger. Adoptive parent must sign an affidavit affirming that the child will receive vaccinations within 30 days of admission or at the earliest time medically appropriate.

TUBERCULOSIS SKIN TESTS AND X-RAYS

The USCIS requires all adjustment applicants to undergo skin tests for tuberculosis (TB). Many applicants who have been exposed to TB will have positive skin tests, though they are not contagious and are not a public health threat. These applicants must still undergo chest x-rays in order for the Civil Surgeon to verify that the tuberculosis is not infectious.

In many instances, applicants will already know that the skin test will result in a positive measurement, and the Civil Surgeon may suggest skipping the skin test and going straight to the x-rays. This, however, is not the correct procedure for the Civil Surgeon. Remember: **the USCIS requires all adjustment applicants to undergo skin tests for TB.** The reason all applicants must have skin tests is that the skin test measures a certain degree of infection, and this measurement is used to determine if further treatment is necessary, even if an x-ray is normal. The skin test measures the blister that develops when the applicant is injected with a purified protein derivative (PPD) from the TB bacterium. If the blister is equal to or greater than 5 millimeters, then the applicant is considered positive and must obtain x-rays. If the blister is equal to or greater than 10 millimeters, even if they obtain a normal x-ray, the Civil Surgeon should refer them to their local health department for preventive therapy that should be completed before the exam results are submitted to the USCIS. So obtaining a normal chest x-ray is not sufficient. **All adjustment applicants must obtain skin tests.**