

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Going Back to School Means....

Coldwater, MI. Going back to school can mean lots of different things. For most people, it means that summer is ending and fall is right around the corner. For others, it might mean the start of football season. For the nurses at your local health department, it means it's time to immunize!

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants to remind parents that this time of year is the perfect time to make sure that their "going back to school students" are up-to-date with their immunizations. Vaccination protects students from diseases and keeps them healthy.

According to Kim Brown, Prevention Services Director at the tri-county health department, "We want parents to know that by law, their children must be up-to-date on their required immunizations to start school. Vaccines are a safe and effective way to help individuals protect themselves, their families, and loved ones from disease." Required childhood immunization for Michigan school settings are as follows:

Students 4 to 6 years of age:

- 4 doses of DTP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis) or DTaP, with one dose occurring on or after 4 years of age;
- 4 doses of Polio (if third dose is administered on or after 4 years of age, only 3 doses are required)
- 2 doses of MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella)
- 3 doses of Hepatitis B
- 2 doses of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine

Students 7 to 18 years of age (*including 6th grade students*)

In addition to the above stated immunizations:

- 1 dose of Tdap for children 11 to 18 years **if** it has been 5 years since the last dose of tetanus/diphtheria containing vaccine
- 1 dose of meningococcal vaccine for children 11 years of age and older upon entry into 6th grade or higher.

The following vaccinations are not required but are highly recommended.

- For 11 and 12 year olds of both sexes: 3 doses of HPV vaccine to protect against Human Papillomavirus-related disease. HPV has been connected to genital warts and certain cancers.
- 1 dose of seasonal flu shot annually to protect against the flu.

Students who are going off to college should check with their college's student health center to determine what vaccinations are required.

Kim Brown states, "If you don't have health insurance, or if it does not cover vaccines, the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program may be able to help. There is no fee for the cost of VFC vaccine for eligible children." To qualify for the VFC program, a child must be:

- Medicaid eligible,
- American Indian or Alaskan Native,
- Uninsured, or
- Underinsured. Underinsured means a child has health insurance, but it won't cover the vaccine(s) because it doesn't cover any vaccines, it doesn't cover certain vaccines, or it covers vaccines, but it has a fixed dollar limit or cap for vaccines. Once that fixed dollar amount has been reached, a child is eligible.

While immunization is the best protection against disease, waivers can be obtained that allow students who have not been fully immunized as required to attend school. Contact your local health department to schedule an appointment to learn more about the immunization waiver process, as well as the risk associated with immunization non-compliance.

Going back to school means lots of things, including lots of students in close quarters spreading germs. Reduce that risk by making sure your student is fully immunized! To learn more about the immunization program or vaccination

requirements, contact your local health department's county offices in Coldwater, Hillsdale or Three Rivers by calling:

Branch County

517-279-9561

Hillsdale County

517-437-7395

St. Joseph County

269-273-2161

Or visit our website at www.bhsj.org.

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