

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Back to School Immunizations!

Coldwater, MI. As students head back to school, be sure they have everything they need on the first day -- especially their back-to-school immunizations. Dr. H. Lauren Vogel, M.D., Medical Director for the tri-county health department states "Preschoolers to college students need vaccinations. Before vaccines, many children died from diseases that vaccines now prevent, such as whooping cough, measles, and polio. The same germs exist today, but because babies are protected by vaccines, we don't see these diseases nearly as often." Because vaccine-preventable diseases are still being reported in Branch, Hillsdale, St. Joseph and their neighboring counties, the health department wants to remind parents that the best way to protect their children and their families from diseases is to immunize.

"Vaccines are among the most successful and cost-effective public health tools available for preventing disease and death," states Rebecca Burns, Health Officer for the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency. "They not only help protect vaccinated individuals, but they also help protect the entire community by reducing and preventing the spread of infectious diseases."

In Michigan, all school-age children are required to be vaccinated prior to school entry according to the following schedule:

Required Childhood Immunizations for Michigan School Settings

Vaccine**	4 years to 6 years	7 years to 18 years
Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertusis	4 doses, 1 dose must be on or after 4 years of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none">4 doses D and T OR 3 doses Td if 1 dose is given

(DPT, DTaP, Tdap)		on or after 7 years of age <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 dose of Tdap for children 11 years or older upon entry into 7th grade or higher
Polio	4 doses, if dose 3 is administered on or after 4 years of age, only 3 doses are required	3 doses
Measles* Mumps* Rubella*	2 doses on or after 12 months of age	
Hepatitis B*	3 doses	
Meningococcal	None	1 dose for all children 11 years of age or older upon entry into 7 th grade or higher
Varicella* (Chickenpox)	2 doses of varicella at or after 12 months of age OR current lab immunity OR reliable history of disease	

*If vaccination is not administered, current laboratory evidence of immunity is required.

**Students susceptible to these diseases may be excluded from school.

Parents/guardians must obtain a certified nonmedical waiver from a local health department.

In addition to the vaccines required for admission into schools, parents should consider two other important immunizations: *Flu* and *HPV*.

Influenza or Flu Shots. All children, 6 months and older, should get flu shots. Getting all the children in a family vaccinated against flu—as well as other family members and caregivers—can help protect infants younger than 6 months old. Ask about getting flu shots for your children to protect them from coming down with a bad case of the flu.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV). HPV vaccinations are important because they prevent HPV infections that later can cause cancer. The HPV vaccine is recommended

for preteen boys and girls at age 11 or 12 to assure they are protected well before being exposed to the virus. HPV vaccine also produces a higher immune response in preteens than in older adolescents. If your teen hasn't gotten the vaccine yet, talk to your health care professional about getting it for them as soon as possible.

Immunizations are available through primary care physicians and through the local health department. Students who:

- Lack health insurance that covers the cost of immunizations,
- are uninsured, or
- are covered by Medicaid

are eligible for free vaccinations through the Vaccine for Children Program. Call your local provider to learn more or check out the health department's website at www.bhsj.org.

To learn more about other programs and services available that can help you protect your child's health, visit the health department's website at www.bhsj.org.

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