



"Your Local
Health Department"

Branch - Hillsdale - St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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August 16, 2018

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Plan for School Success with Good Health

Coldwater, MI – You're getting your students ready to go back to school with new back packs, pencils, and note books, but have you thought about their back-to-school vaccines? The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants to encourage you to help your pre-teen and teenage students be fully prepared for school by being fully immunized. Immunizations help protect your kids from contracting easily preventable diseases. And by immunizing them, you can also help to protect others as well. Whenever children are brought into group settings, there is a chance for diseases to spread. Students must follow state vaccine laws in order to attend school.

According to Yvonne Atwood, Director of Personal Health and Disease Prevention at the tri-county agency, "Keeping up-to-date on immunizations is an important step in your student's success. A healthy student is more able to fully participate in their learning. While childhood vaccines have done much to reduce many diseases in the United States, vacationers can bring old and new diseases back into the country. Measles, for example, is still prevalent in other parts of the world and has been linked to recent outbreaks in Michigan."

In addition to the flu vaccine which preteens and teens should receive every year, there are three vaccines recommended. These vaccines should be started when kids are 11 to 12 years old and include:

- **Tdap vaccine** is a booster against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis. Pertussis, or whooping cough, can keep kids out of school and activities for weeks. It can also be spread to babies, which can be very dangerous.
- **Meningococcal vaccine** protects against meningococcal disease. Meningococcal disease is caused by bacteria. It's a leading cause of bacterial meningitis (a serious infection around the brain and spinal cord) and its complications.
- **HPV vaccine** protects both males and females against certain types of Human Papillomavirus. This virus is a common cause of cervical cancer in women. HPV vaccine can also help protect boys against genital warts and anal cancer.

Families with children age 18 or younger, who are uninsured or whose insurance does not cover immunizations, are eligible for free vaccinations through the health department's Vaccines for Children program (VFC). The health department offers immunizations by appointment, and once a week at each of its county offices:

- Branch County on Mondays
- Hillsdale County on Wednesdays
- St. Joseph County on Tuesdays

Contact the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency county office to schedule an appointment or go to our website at www.bhsj.org to view the recommended vaccination schedule. Helping your student be successful in school begins with helping them to be healthy. Follow us on Facebook for health tips and clinic updates at www.facebook.com/BHSJWIC

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