

Back-to-school supplies may include vaccinations

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Now is the time to beat the back-to-school rush for vaccination requirements and recommendations. For children returning to the classroom within the next several weeks, from kindergarten to college, chances are that some of them may need immunizations.

“Our immunization clinics tend to get very busy with the beginning of the school year so now is a great time to schedule appointments to ensure your child is fully protected,” said Betsy Marquardt, the Northeast Colorado Health Department’s immunization coordinator. “Up-to-date immunizations promote disease prevention and wellness and many are required for entry into school. You are not only protecting your child with immunizations, but also your community.”

Immunizations are available through your medical provider or at your local health department. The federally funded Vaccine for Children program enables health departments to offer vaccinations at a low cost, although money should never stop anyone from getting immunized.

If you’re not sure your child is up-to-date on their immunizations, contact your medical provider or review the general vaccination guidelines below.

—Children entering kindergarten should have the following vaccinations: the fifth DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis), fourth polio, second MMR (measles, mumps and rubella), second varicella (chicken pox) and Hepatitis B series. The Hepatitis A series is also recommended.

—Children entering sixth grade and 10th grade need: Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis). The Hepatitis A series is also recommended.

—Even high school and college-age students aren’t exempt from vaccine recommendations. Meningococcal vaccine prevents meningococcal disease, a potentially life-threatening illness and the leading cause of bacterial meningitis. The vaccine is recommended for children and adolescents 11 through 18 years of age. College freshmen are at a slightly increased risk of developing this disease due to tight living quarters in dormitories, the increased stress level their first year away from home and lack of sleep.

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—HPV vaccine (human papillomavirus) is recommended for all girls and may be started at 11–12 years of age. HPV is important because it can cause cervical cancer in women. Every year in the U.S. about 10,000 women get cervical cancer, and 3,700 die from it.

According to Marquardt, students and their parents should discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination with their health care providers.

The Northeast Colorado Health Department will be offering several immunization clinics as the school year approaches. To locate the health department closest to you and view an immunization clinic schedule, visit NCHD online at www.nchd.org or call 877-795-0646.

Shots are \$14.50 each for children 18 years and younger, but nobody is turned away for inability to pay. Information about immunizations is also available online at www.immunizecoloradoskids.com

Anyone under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian to receive a vaccination at NCHD. Also, in order to accurately assess a child's immunization status, parents need to take their child's personal immunization record to each clinic visit. Having a personal immunization record in hand allows clinic staff to review and update it with the new immunizations.