



For Immediate Release

To: Local Media
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Back to School

Hancock- It's early August so there is still plenty of time for beach outings and barbeques, but the new school year is just ahead and it is important to plan right now for the immunizations your child needs. According to Dr. Terry Frankovich, health department Medical Director, "Parents need to know that there are some new school vaccination requirements this year, so it is important to check with their healthcare provider or the health department to see if their child is completely up to date on vaccination." This year, all sixth grade students who are 11 years of age and older, as well as all children 11 through 18 years of age who are changing school districts, will need:

- Two doses of varicella (Var) vaccine or history of chickenpox disease
- One dose of meningococcal (MCV4 OR MPSV4) vaccine
- One dose of tetanus/diphtheria/acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine (if 5 years have passed since last dose of tetanus/diphtheria vaccine - DTaP, Td or DT)

Children in this age group may also receive the HPV (human papillomavirus) vaccine and the seasonal flu vaccine, when it becomes available. These, along with the previously recommended routine childhood vaccines, will help protect your child from serious diseases.

This year, the pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine, is more important than ever. Michigan is one of several states experiencing an increase in pertussis cases and has already had one infant death. Houghton, Baraga and Keweenaw Counties alone have had over 75 confirmed cases, since March of this year.

Pertussis usually begins with a runny nose and mild cough and little or no fever. It then progresses to a more severe cough, with spasms of coughing which may cause vomiting. Some, but not all individuals, will actually make a whooping sound as they take a breath between coughing spasms. This is how pertussis came to be called "whooping cough." Antibiotics are used to help decrease contagiousness in people with pertussis and can be used to help prevent infection in close contacts, but they do not "cure" the illness and symptoms may last for 6-10 weeks. Complications of pertussis in older children and adults may include pneumonia and rib fractures. Infants under 6 months of age are most at risk for severe disease due to pertussis, with possible complications including pneumonia, seizures and rarely, death.

Dr. Frankovich notes that children normally receive a DTaP vaccine, providing protection against pertussis, at 2, 4, 6 and 12-15 months of age, and a booster dose at 4-6 years of age. "Some parents may not realize that another booster dose (called Tdap), is now recommended for children at 11 years of age. This one-time booster is actually recommended for everyone 11-64 years of age," Frankovich said, "and can help to protect everyone in the community, including newborns and young infants, who are most at risk of serious disease. This has been brought home to us by the recent deaths of 7 infants in California due to pertussis.

Because of the current outbreak, Dr. Frankovich reminds parents, "the best way to protect your family is to make sure that everyone in the household is up-to-date on their pertussis as well as all other vaccinations. The health department is offering special back to school immunization clinics this month. Individuals should call their healthcare provider or the health department at 482-7382, for information or to schedule an appointment.

Beat the Back-to-School Rush! Bring in your children and teens for needed vaccines now

It's the middle of summer and the farthest thing from your mind may be getting your children ready for school. However, summer is an ideal time to cross off immunizations from your back-to-school checklist. Why not beat the rush? As the first day of school gets closer, doctors' offices tend to be swamped with children and adolescents needing sports physicals and back-to-school vaccines.

Vaccines aren't just for babies. Pre-teens and adolescents need immunizations, too. All older children and adolescents need meningococcal and pertussis (whooping cough) vaccines. Children who haven't had chickenpox disease need two doses of varicella vaccine to be fully protected. The HPV (human papillomavirus) vaccine is recommended for girls at 11-12 years of age and also may be given to boys. In addition, everyone (including healthy children and teens) should receive seasonal flu vaccine every year. These, along with the previously recommended routine childhood vaccines, will help protect your child from serious diseases.

Children with long-term medical conditions, such as sickle cell disease or diabetes, are at greater risk for some diseases and therefore may need additional vaccines. There are two types of pneumococcal vaccines for those at risk. Be sure to ask your doctor if your child needs one or both of these vaccines.

New school immunization requirements are going into effect in Michigan during the upcoming school year. School immunization requirements may differ slightly from the recommended immunization schedule approved by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP). Following the recommended immunization schedule will provide the best protection for your children. When you visit your doctor's office this summer, ask that your children receive all recommended vaccines rather than just those required for school entry.

If your child does not have health insurance, or does not have insurance that covers the recommended vaccines, ask your health care provider or local health department about the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. The VFC program can assist families who are in need of immunizations for their children. This program provides vaccines to eligible children and adolescents birth through 18 years of age. Children can receive VFC vaccine if they: 1) are on Medicaid; 2) are eligible for Medicaid; 3) do not have health insurance; 4) are American Indian or Alaskan Native; or 5) are under-insured.

As the new school year approaches, physician offices and local health departments are busy working to ensure that children attending schools and child care programs have received all of their vaccines. WUPHD encourages parents to make sure their children are up-to-date on their immunizations. Beat the August rush and bring in your children and teens for needed vaccines now.

To make an appointment or if you have any questions, please call your physician or the WUPHD at (906) 482-7382.