



Press Release

July 24, 2009

Time for Back-to-School Immunizations

Galveston County and Cities –The Galveston County Health District is reminding parents that as the new school year approaches they need to make sure their children’s immunizations are up to date and remember that schools require children to be properly immunized. Each year in August the importance of back-to-school immunizations is emphasized as part of National Immunization Awareness Month.

Dr. Mark Guidry, Galveston County Health Authority, says “Vaccines are a great public health achievement. Every year, our immunization clinics see hundreds of parents and children seeking to meet school-entry vaccination requirements. The back-to-school rush is our largest immunization effort each year. While we are glad to see children receiving required immunizations we remind parents the best protection is having their children immunized on time and by doing so they can avoid the long lines during the back-to-school rush.”

Guidry points out that there have been changes when it comes to school immunization requirements which take effect August 1st. Changes affect mainly students entering kindergarten and seventh grade. All immunizations must be completed by the first day of attendance at public and private schools. The vaccines and new requirements are.

- **Hepatitis A vaccine:** Students entering kindergarten statewide must have had two doses of the hepatitis A vaccine.
- **Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine:** Students entering kindergarten must have had two doses of the MMR vaccine. Students in grades 1 through 12 must continue to meet the current requirement, which is two doses of a measles-containing vaccine and one dose each of mumps and rubella vaccine.
- **Varicella vaccine:** Students entering kindergarten and seventh grade must have had two doses. Students in grades 1 through 6 and 8 through 12 must continue to meet the current requirement, which is one dose of

- varicella vaccine; or documentation of previous illness with a written statement from a physician, school nurse, or the child's parent or guardian.
- **Tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis-containing vaccine (Tdap):** Students entering seventh grade must have had one dose of Tdap vaccine. Students in seventh grade must have had a booster dose of Tdap, but only if it has been five years since their last dose of a tetanus-containing vaccine. Students in grades 8 through 12 must have had a booster dose of Tdap if it has been 10 years since their last dose of a tetanus-containing vaccine.
 - **Meningococcal vaccine:** Students entering seventh grade must have had one dose.

The Health District operates several immunization clinics but they are not all large enough to accommodate the increased numbers seeking services during the back to school rush. Due to space limitations immunization clinics in Dickinson and Texas City are relocated to facilities in La Marque where the Health District will be hosting their seventh annual Kids Health Fest, August 6th through the 27th to better accommodate the crowd and related activities.

Vaccinations will be given in the La Marque office at 1207 Oak Street, Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 9 am to 5 pm. On Wednesdays immunizations will be given from 10 am to 7 pm.

A second location where immunizations may be obtained is the Galveston Immunization Clinic in the Island Community Center at 4700 Broadway which will be open on Mondays and Fridays 9 am to 5 pm. and Wednesdays from 10 am to 7 pm.

Due to the busy schedules of families preparing for a new school year the Health District has also scheduled several community immunization clinics at the following locations:

- Saturday August 8th, Texas City 4C's Clinic, 2000 Texas Avenue, 10 am to 12 noon.
- Tuesday, August 11th, League City Wal-Mart, 1701 West FM 646, 10 am to 2 pm.
- Saturday, August 22nd, Mall of the Mainland, 10000 Emmett F. Lowry Expressway, 10 am to 3 pm.

Parents are asked to bring their child's immunization record with them. Some children may already be in the electronic immunization registry, known as ImmTrac. For those children all a parent needs to provide is the child's name and date of birth to verify needed immunizations. If there is no record for a

child, parents will be given the opportunity to enroll their child in ImmTrac which make their child's immunization records electronically available in frequent circumstances when parents do not have a paper immunization record available.

Staff will also be using this time to educate parents about the dangers of lead poisoning and encourage testing of children one to six years of age.

Volunteers and incentives will be used to make the experience of getting an immunization as pleasant as possible. Members of the Health District's Immunization Advisory Council have assisted efforts by meeting regularly to brainstorm innovative ideas on how to reach more kids. "We want to make sure that getting shots is as pleasant an experience as possible for both parents and children," says Dr. Cassandra Arceneaux, Director of Community Health Programs. "We appreciate and welcome community support in terms of volunteers and donations for incentives."

At various times during the event kids may find a variety of things to occupy their time while waiting like visiting fire trucks, ambulances and animals from the Galveston County Joe Vickery Animal Shelter.

The Galveston County Health District includes both childhood and adult immunizations in its strategic health plan which is a tool guiding their activities through 2010.

For more information on Galveston County Health District immunization activities or to volunteer time or needed incentives such as children's stickers, books, tokens or entertainment, call (409) 938-2244 or visit www.gchd.org.

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