
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Immunizations should top Back-to-School List

GRAND RAPIDS - It's that time of year - parents will be buying new clothes and school supplies as kids prepare to go back to school. Health and disease prevention should be on the "to do" list. Michigan law requires children receive specific immunizations before they start school. August is National Immunization Awareness Month. Make sure your child is up-to-date on immunizations this year.

"Safe, effective vaccines protect children against a number of illnesses, such as chicken pox, diphtheria, measles, mumps, pertussis, polio, and tetanus, to name a few," according to Adam London, Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. "Some of these illnesses can be deadly. Make sure your children are protected according to the schedules based on CDC guidelines." The Kent County Health Department has a list of vaccinations, and when children should receive them, posted at:

<http://www.accesskent.com/Health/Immunizations>.

The World Health Organization estimates that timely vaccinations save between 2 and 3 million people worldwide every year. Children should receive most of their vaccinations by the time they are 18 months old. There are some additional vaccinations that are not only required by the state of Michigan for school but recommended for all children at 4-6 years of age, and again at 11 or 12 years.

Even adults need to think about immunizations. Last year, Kent County saw a surge in confirmed flu cases reporting to doctors' offices and emergency departments. Annual flu vaccinations are now recommended for all individuals, ages 6 months and older. Adults, especially those who are pregnant or plan to be around infants, should talk to their health care provider about a Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis) vaccine.

The Kent County Health Department has several locations where children and adults can receive routine immunization services. Individuals who qualify for the Vaccines for Children Program (VFC) or the Michigan Vaccine Replacement Program (MI-VRP) are eligible to receive certain vaccines free of charge at the Kent County Health Department. Individuals with no insurance or those whose insurance does not cover immunizations will be charged a sliding fee scale vaccine administration fee based on income for each injection given. The Kent County Health Department bills Medicaid, but does not bill private insurance, so check for coverage before visiting any Health Department Clinic. Call (616) 632-7200 if you have any questions or want to schedule an appointment.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.