

Department of Health Launches Immunization Campaign with a Message to Parents: "Don't Wait. Vaccinate."

World Immunization Week, April 24 – 30, 2016

Scranton, PA – The Department of Health (DOH) today partnered with the Scranton School District to kick off its 2016 "Don't Wait. Vaccinate." campaign. Secretary of Health Dr. Karen Murphy read to kindergarten children at John G. Whittier Elementary School in Scranton and reminded parents to make getting their children's vaccines a top priority before the end of the current school year.

"Scheduling your children now for the vaccines they will need to start the next school year will help you cross one item off your fall "back-to-school" list and will help you ensure there are no surprises when your children return to classes," said Secretary Murphy. "Vaccines help protect children against 14 childhood diseases that can be very serious or even deadly. A good rule of thumb is to always make vaccines a part of your child's regular school physical before they enter kindergarten and seventh grade. Keeping their vaccinations current will help keep your child in class and help us create healthy schools that teach."

Children in grades K-12 need the following immunizations for attendance: tetanus, diphtheria, polio, MMR (measles, mumps, rubella), hepatitis B, and chickenpox. Children entering the seventh grade also need additional immunizations of meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV) and tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (Tdap).

The Department of Health regularly schedules immunization clinics year round across the state. If a child doesn't have any insurance coverage or if insurance does not cover back-to-school immunizations, children who meet the requirements can get all of the vaccines listed above at one of the commonwealth's state health centers or local health departments. Immunizations are provided at little or no cost for children through 18 years of age who are Medicaid eligible, uninsured, underinsured, or American Indian or Alaska Native. The cost is \$5 per child (payable by check or money order) for families above income guidelines; however, no child will be turned away because of an inability to pay.

Parents whose children meet the immunization requirements must call 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258) to schedule an appointment. Parents should have their vaccination records available when they call to make an appointment. A parent/legal guardian must accompany the child receiving immunizations. DOH staff will need to be notified prior to the appointment if someone other than the child's parent/legal guardian will be accompanying him/her.

This week is also World Immunization Week, which reminds us that immunization is one of the most successful and cost-effective means to help children grow into healthy adults. Sponsored by the World Health Organization, the goal is to promote the use of vaccines to protect people of all ages against disease.

"Vaccines are not just for children," Dr. Murphy added. "Immunization is a shared responsibility. Families, health care professionals, public health officials, and schools must work together to help protect the entire community."

For more information, visit www.dontwaitvaccinate.pa.gov or call 1-877-PA-HEALTH.

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