



Mendocino County Health and Human Services Agency

Healthy People, Healthy Communities

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Erika Nosera, Public Health Nurse

Community Health Services

Phone: 707-472-2713

Email: noserae@co.mendocino.ca.us

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER REMINDS PARENTS THAT THEIR CHILDREN NEED IMMUNIZATIONS AS THEY HEAD BACK TO SCHOOL

With the new school year fast approaching, Public Health Officer, Dr. Craig McMillan, urges parents to make sure their children are fully immunized before classes begin.

"Immunizations are a safe and effective way to help kids stay healthy by protecting them from serious diseases, such as whooping cough, hepatitis B and chickenpox," Dr. McMillan said. "These illnesses are still around and can rapidly spread between children who have not been fully immunized. Complications from these diseases can be devastating to children and their families."

California schools are required to verify each child's immunization record to ensure that all required shots are completed. Before entering kindergarten, children must have a total of five shots of DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis), four of polio, three of hepatitis B, two of MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) and one of varicella (chickenpox).

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also recommends that preteens and young adults get the following immunizations:

The new tetanus booster (Tdap). This vaccine protects against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough). Whooping cough, which is highly contagious, can lead to a severe cough that can cause vomiting and

Stacey Cryer
Agency
Interim Director

Susan Era
Agency
Interim Assistant Director

Administration
1120 S. Dora St.
Ukiah, CA 95482
Ph.: (707) 472-2333
Fax: (707) 472-2335

Fiscal
Doug Gherkin,
Chief Financial Officer
(707) 472-2338
Fax: (707) 472-2335

Staff Resources
Pat Meek, Manager
(707) 472-2339
Fax: (707) 467-5834

❖
SYSTEM OF CARE:

Susan Era, Director
Adult and Older Adult
747 S. State St.
Ukiah, CA 95482
(707) 463-7900
Fax: (707) 463-7979

Children and Family
860 N. Bush St.
Ukiah, CA 95482
(707) 463-5481
Fax: (707) 463-4043

Stacey Cryer, Director
Community Health Services
1120 S. Dora St.
Ukiah, CA 95482
(707) 472-2600
Fax: (707) 472-2773

Employment and Family Assistance Services
Sandi Brown, Deputy Director
(707) 463-2437
Fax: (707) 463-7859



broken ribs. A Tdap booster shot will also help protect close contacts (e.g. infants) that may be at risk for more serious complications from the disease. This vaccine is highly recommended at this time to help stop the current epidemic of whooping cough in the State of California.

Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4). This vaccine protects against invasive meningococcal disease, a serious illness that can infect the blood and cause meningitis. It is recommended for preteens (11-12 years of age) and for all previously unvaccinated adolescents at high school entry and college freshmen living in dorms.

Chickenpox vaccine. A second dose of chickenpox vaccine is recommended for all children over 4 years of age who have not had the disease.

Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. This 3-shot series is now recommended for girls 11-12 years of age to prevent cervical cancer in adulthood. This 3-shot series is now recommended for Boys 11-12 years of age to reduce their likelihood of acquiring genital warts. Other females and males ages 9-26 are also eligible to receive the vaccine.

"Schools and child care providers do an excellent job working with families to make sure children get the shots they need before they enter school," said Dr. McMillan. "Their efforts to protect the children from serious diseases have resulted in high immunization rates in Mendocino County."

The Mendocino County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), Community Health Branch is offering immunization clinics during August and September in Fort Bragg, Willits and Ukiah.

For more information about school immunization requirements, vaccine recommendations, and vaccine-preventable diseases, parents should contact their child's physician, school nurse or Mendocino County HHSA Community Health Branch immunization program at 707- 472-2600 or 800-734-7793. California school immunization laws provide an exemption for medical reasons and personal beliefs.

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