

NEWS



Edward A. Diana
Orange County Executive

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09-21-11 THIS WEEK IN ORANGE COUNTY BY EDWARD A. DIANA

It's hard to believe that summer has passed and another school year is underway. As you go through your new school year checklist to make sure your child has everything he or she needs for a successful school year, please make sure one critical item is at the top of your list – immunizations.

More important than having the right backpack, bluejeans, or box of crayons, immunizations safeguard our children against the potentially devastating effects of vaccine preventable diseases. No family should ever have to suffer the heartache of a child being stricken by a vaccine preventable disease. What you may think of as just a childhood disease can result in life-long catastrophic effects or even death. Why take a chance?

That's why, at the start of the new school year, Orange County Commissioner of Health, Dr. Jean M. Hudson, has asked me to urge parents to make sure their child's immunizations are up to date. Many recommended childhood vaccines start at birth and go through 24 months, some with boosters and follow-up vaccines through the teenage years and even into adulthood.

Vaccines can be administered to children to protect against Diphtheria, Polio, Whooping Cough, Tetanus, Measles, Mumps, Rubella (German Measles), Hepatitis, HIB (Haemophilus influenza type B, a cause of meningitis), Hepatitis B, Hepatitis A, Chickenpox and Meningitis. If you're not sure what vaccines your child needs, check with your health care provider or contact the Orange County Health Department office closest to you. In Newburgh, call 568-5333, in Middletown, 346-1113, or in Goshen, 291-2369.

Dr. Hudson also warns that adults should ensure that their shots are up to date as well, especially if travel abroad is planned. Unfortunately, a number of vaccine preventable diseases have recently seen a resurgence. These include measles, whooping cough/pertussis, and even chicken pox. This year alone, 10,000 cases of measles have been reported in Europe; so, you see, we're not just talking about travel to third world nations. If international travel is in your future, take time, well in advance of your trip, to talk to your health care provider about what vaccines you should have, or call the Travel clinic at the County Health Department at 291-2369.

Fall is also the time to start thinking about flu shots. Influenza activity usually lasts from October to May in the U.S. The CDC recommends that everyone six months of age and older get their yearly flu vaccine as soon as vaccines become available in their community. Flu vaccines are already available at a number of locations in our community and the County Department of Health will begin flu clinics in September. For more information on clinics, call 291-4300.

It's no surprise that good health is essential to school success, so I ask you to please follow Dr. Hudson's advice and make sure your child is protected. I wish all of our students, from kindergartner to graduate, the very best for a happy, healthy, and successful school year.

Until next week,

Edward A. Diana, County Executive