

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

May 2010

Dear Parent:

Beginning this fall, there are new vaccination requirements for all Michigan school children. These requirements come from the Michigan Department of Community Health and the Michigan Department of Education. The primary changes have been sent to your child's school and are also listed below:

All new kindergartener's, all 6th graders, all children changing school districts are now required to have:

- 2 doses of Varicella (chicken pox) or history of the disease

All children 11-18 years of age are now required to have:

- One dose of the meningitis vaccine
- One dose of Tetanus (if it has been more than 5 years since their last dose)

Many school age children do not have these vaccines. They will be required for school this fall. This letter is to urge you in the strongest terms to get this done now, and not wait until school is about to begin before you try and get your child vaccinated.

The good news! The Health Department currently has federally subsidized vaccine that you can receive at no charge. We cannot guarantee that we will have access to this vaccine this fall and 4 vaccinations can routinely cost several hundred dollars. In addition, the chicken pox vaccination is a 2 shot series with a 28 day wait between shots, adding an additional month to the process. As you can see, getting this done in the Spring is to everyone's advantage.

What should you do now? Review your child(s) immunization records with your provider and determine if they are up-to-date with the vaccines that they will need to have in the upcoming school year. If you don't feel you have the most current information, or don't have a regular provider, you can call the Health Department in your County and we will assist you. Each of our 3 county offices will have two points of contact for you to ask questions, request materials, etc. These are listed below. These vaccines have been available for years, however, this coming fall they will be required.

Health Department contact information for the tri-county area:

Branch County – JoAnn Wilczynski 517-279-9561 x 143 or Belinda Whitely – 517-279-9561 x 100
Hillsdale County – Janet Breneman – 517-437-7395 x 110 or Heather Simmers – 517-437-7395 x 136
St. Joseph County – Aimmee Mullendore – 269-273-2161 x 241 or Kimber Tracy – 269-273-2161 x 208

Additional materials will also be available through your school, from the Health Department or on the internet at www.bhsj.org.

Steve Todd – Health Officer
Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

**New Rules Regarding Immunizations for Schools and Parents
Effective for November 2010 Report period
(From the Michigan Department of Community)**

Attention school personnel and parents. Required for all children entering kindergarten, all 6th grade students, and all children changing school districts.

- Two doses of chickenpox vaccine (or history of the disease)

Required for all children 11 – 18 years of age who are changing districts or who are enrolled in 6th grade

- One dose of meningitis vaccine (MCV4 or MPSV4)
- One dose of Tdap vaccine (if 5 years have passed since last of dose of tetanus (DTap, Td or DT))

These Vaccines are available at the Health Department or through your medical provider.

What do these vaccinations prevent?

Chickenpox - Before the vaccine became available, about 4 million children in the United States contracted chickenpox each year, and nearly 11,000 people were hospitalized and about 100 people died each year from chickenpox infections. Thanks to the vaccine, the number of cases and hospitalizations is down dramatically. However, when chickenpox does occur, it's highly contagious among people who aren't immune. Most people think of chickenpox as a mild disease — and, for most, it is. But, there's no way to know which infected child or adult will develop a severe case.

Meningitis - Meningitis is an inflammation of the membranes and fluid surrounding your brain and spinal cord, usually due to an infection. The swelling associated with meningitis often triggers symptoms, including headache, fever and a stiff neck. Most cases of meningitis are caused by a viral infection, but bacterial and fungal infections also can lead to meningitis. Depending on the cause of the infection, meningitis can go away in a couple of weeks — **or it can be a life-threatening emergency.** If you suspect that you or someone in your family has signs or symptoms of meningitis, seek medical care right away. Early treatment can prevent serious complications.

Pertussis - Whooping cough (or pertussis) is a highly contagious respiratory infection. In advanced stages, it's marked by a severe, hacking cough followed by a high-pitched intake of breath that sounds like "whoop." One hundred years ago, whooping cough was a leading cause of childhood illness and death in the United States. But after the introduction of a vaccine, the number of cases gradually declined, reaching a low in the mid-1970s. Since then, however, the incidence of whooping cough has been increasing, primarily among children too young to have completed all of their vaccinations and teenagers and adults whose immunity has faded.

More information about these diseases and their vaccines can be found at the Health Department website:

www.bhsj.org or at the CDC at www.cdc.gov