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**Make immunizations a part of your back-to-school routine for children and adolescents**

August's arrival marks the final days of summer vacation and sets the stage for a new school year—and it's the perfect time to catch up on your student's immunizations so they are protected in the year ahead. Public health officials are reminding parents and guardians to check with their health care provider or local health department to find out what vaccines their child and adolescent needs.

"Ensuring children and adolescents are current on all recommended vaccines is one of the most important things parents can do to protect their student's health--and their classmates," said Joshua Meyerson, MD, Medical Director for the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. "Immunizations not only help protect vaccinated individuals, but they also help protect the entire community by reducing and preventing the spread of infectious diseases."

Vaccine-preventable diseases, such as chicken pox, meningitis, pertussis (whooping cough) and others, are still experienced in Northern Michigan. Unimmunized or under-immunized school-age children are at risk of these illnesses, and they can further spread disease to their families and other community members. Babies who are too young to be fully vaccinated and people with weakened immune systems are especially vulnerable.

"Every dose of every vaccine is important to protect your child and others from infectious diseases", said Dr. Meyerson.

He also reminds parents and guardians about the recent change in Michigan's school immunization requirements. While medical waivers may be issued by physicians, those who want to claim a nonmedical waiver for their child must receive education regarding vaccination and disease through their local health department.

Appointments for immunizations and immunization waiver education are available now in Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego county at Health Department offices, including Child & Adolescent Health Clinics by calling 800-432-4121 during business hours.

For additional information about child and adolescent immunization, contact your family's health care provider or local health department or visit [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules) or [www.vaccineinformation.org](http://www.vaccineinformation.org).

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego Counties. To learn more about immunizations and other Health Department services, visit [www.nwhealth.org](http://www.nwhealth.org).

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