

August is National Immunization Awareness Month

Every year August rolls around bringing thoughts of getting children ready to go back to school. This usually includes school clothes, backpacks and all of the back to school supplies kids need for that first day of school. But what about vaccinations? August is also National Immunization Awareness Month. According to the National Public Health Information Coalition, getting vaccinated according to the recommended immunization schedule is one of the most important things a parent can do to protect their child's health. Diseases can quickly spread among groups of children who aren't vaccinated. Whether it's a baby starting at a new child care facility, a toddler heading to preschool, a student going back to elementary, middle or high school – or even a college freshman – parents should check their child's vaccination records.

Child care facilities, preschool programs, schools and colleges are prone to outbreaks of infectious diseases. Children in these settings can easily spread illnesses to one another due to poor hand washing, not covering their coughs, and other factors such as interacting in crowded environments.

When children are not vaccinated, they are at increased risk for disease and can spread disease to others in their play groups, child care centers, classrooms and communities – including babies who are too young to be fully vaccinated and people with weakened immune systems due to cancer and other health conditions.

Additionally, all states have school laws as well as health department laws requiring children who are entering child care or school to be vaccinated against certain diseases. Colleges and universities may have their own requirements, especially for students living in residence halls. Parents should check with their child's doctor, school or the local health department to learn about the requirements in their state or county.

Newman Memorial Hospital offers a walk-in Immunization Clinic with no appointment necessary. It is available Monday through Thursday from 8:30 to 4:00 and Friday from 8:30 to noon for infants and children up to 18 years of age. Adult immunizations are also available. For more information or to check and see if your child is up to date, call 580-938-5537.