

## HEALTHY HALLWAYS:



### New Immunizations Help Keep Students Safe

Worldwide, immunization has been called the most important public health intervention in history, second only perhaps to the advances in safe drinking water.

"I think we should be in awe of our ability to prevent disease through immunization," says **Cheryl Matzinger, Infection Control Manager for Dean Health System**. "The contributions that vaccines have added to our quality of life and even improved life expectancy are just staggering."

Last spring, the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services revised the Student Immunization Law. While the changes will be phased in over the next five years, the first of those changes becomes effective September 1, 2008.

### Why Immunize?

"Immunizations protect children against diseases that many people aren't even familiar with anymore because the immunizations have been so effective," explains **Larry Elfman, MD, Pediatrician at Dean's Madison West Clinic**.

Consider these statistics from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

- **Diphtheria** used to be one of the most dreaded of childhood diseases, killing more than 10,000 Americans each year. After we started vaccinating children in the 1930s and 1940s, the disease began to disappear. Today, most doctors will never see a single case of diphtheria, much less have a child die from it.
- In 1962, the year before the **measles** vaccine was introduced, almost 500,000 cases of measles were reported in the United States, and many more cases went unreported. Ten years later, there were about 32,000 cases. Ten years after that, fewer than 2,000 cases. The years 2002 and 2003 **combined** saw only 100 cases.
- Parents in the 1950s were terrified as polio paralyzed children by the thousands. Then we learned how to prevent **polio** using vaccines. There has not been a case of wild virus polio in the United States since 1979.
- **Smallpox** was one of the most devastating diseases the world has ever known. It killed millions of people every year. In 1967, the World Health Organization undertook an intensive, worldwide, mandatory vaccination campaign. Twelve years later, the disease ceased to exist. There hasn't been a single case since. Smallpox is the first – and so far the only – disease we have ever eradicated from the Earth...all thanks to vaccination.

"As it turns out, immunizations are a victim of their own success story in that we no longer worry or fear deadly infectious diseases," Cheryl Matzinger explains. "But the reality is that these diseases remain a risk to those unimmunized in our communities."

"I think as a parent seeing things in the press and on the Internet can certainly be very scary, but just because these allegations regarding serious vaccine side-effects are in print does not necessarily mean that they are supported by any legitimate science" Dr. Elfman relates. "People should not be made complacent because if we allow immunization rates to drop we will see a certain rise in vaccine-preventable illness."

### What's New

Three changes to existing immunizations were added beginning this year:

1. **The Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV)** is now required for children attending licensed daycare. This vaccine helps prevent pneumonia, meningitis, and a percentage of ear infections caused by the pneumococci bacteria.
2. **A pertussis booster (Tdap)** has been added for children in grades 6, 9, and 12 to help prevent whooping cough. Additional grades will be required to obtain the booster next year.
3. **A chicken pox booster (Varicella)** is required for children entering Kindergarten, grade 6, and grade 12. Again, additional grades will be required to receive the booster next year.

For a complete list of all required immunizations, go to

**[www.deancare.com](http://www.deancare.com)**.

If you think your child may not be up to date on immunizations, schedule an appointment with your child's doctor in order to meet the requirements before the school deadline.

### Back-to-School Health 101

Before you send your kids back to school, make sure they are truly prepared by following these health tips:

- **Get your child back on a normal sleep schedule.** Getting enough sleep can improve behavior, mood, and school performance for all ages, as well as reaction times for those teen drivers.
- **Schedule any necessary physicals and stay up to date on immunizations.** Wisconsin has added three new immunization requirements for school-age children. Call now to make an appointment if your child has not yet received the immunizations he or she needs.
- **Protect your child's back.** As they strap on their backpacks and head off to school, be sure not to overload. Your child's backpack, fully loaded, should weigh no more than 20% of his or her body weight.
- **Wash Hands.** Remind them to wash at school and store a bottle of hand sanitizer in their desk, cubby, or locker.

*Have fun and stay healthy!*



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