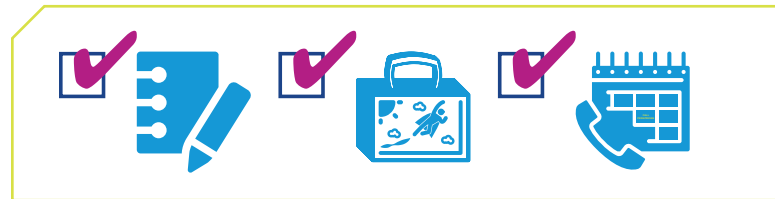


Pediatric Visits and Childhood Immunizations: Getting PA Kids Back in School and Back on Schedule

The COVID-19 pandemic has uprooted the lives of kids and families in Pennsylvania, across the country, and the world. While individuals and economies have yet to recover fully, there are some hopeful signs of moving beyond the necessary restrictions that could not be considered before COVID-19 vaccines became available. However, COVID-19 is still a concern. To ensure that children can safely return to their classrooms for in-person learning this fall, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that students, teachers, and staff wear masks indoors.

In addition to COVID-19, we must not forget to protect our children from other infections that are easily preventable with timely vaccinations. Heading into 2021, pediatric visits remained lower than a typical year¹. Many children missed routine immunizations and the recommended schedule of well-child check-ups as advised by the AAP. That's why our message is simply encouraging families to get their kids back on schedule before they get back in school by making an appointment with their pediatrician.

Protecting ourselves against COVID-19 has understandably been the health focus for many during the pandemic. It is equally important to protect children against the 17 vaccine-preventable childhood diseases², including measles, mumps, and whooping cough. High vaccination coverage helps keep kids healthy enough to stay in school. A couple of years ago, we had a worrisome reminder of just how vital vaccination coverage is, in the form of measles outbreaks in several states, including Pennsylvania³. Routine childhood



immunizations are necessary to maintain community health and protect those at greater risk, especially children who are disabled or immunocompromised.

The latest data from the Pennsylvania Department of Health shows some recovery of kids catching up on routine childhood immunizations towards the end of last year⁴. Yet, the early part of 2021⁵ shows vaccination gaps continued among children, particularly preschool and young school-age children ages 4-10. Let's keep children connected to care to protect against dangerous illnesses proven to be preventable to provide the safest environment to return to in-person learning this fall.

Importance of In-Person, Well-Child Visits



- ✓ Checking healthy weight and nutrition
- ✓ Tracking developmental milestones
- ✓ Screening mental health and social-emotional development
- ✓ Administering routine vaccines against childhood diseases, such as polio, hepatitis, whooping cough, chickenpox, flu, meningitis, and measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)
- ✓ Providing positive parenting support

COVID Vaccines and Children Ages 12+



The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all individuals able to receive a COVID-19 vaccine should get one, which currently includes children ages 12 and older. It's also important to note that vaccines can be co-administered with other important necessary adolescent vaccinations⁶, meaning youth can catch up on missed routine immunizations and get a COVID-19 vaccine simultaneously. Talk to your pediatrician with questions or concerns as you navigate this decision for your family.

#CallYourPediatrician to keep your child safe, healthy, and strong heading into the new school year



PA Families Have Options for Affordable Health Insurance

Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) are open for enrollment 365 days a year. Sign your child up for free or low-cost health insurance today and get peace of mind knowing they're covered.

Medicaid 1-866-550-4355 or [online](#)

CHIP 1-800-986-KIDS (5437) or [online](#)

Additionally, Pennsylvania's health insurance marketplace, Pennie™, became even more affordable for families thanks to the recently passed American Rescue Plan. Sign up today during the COVID relief open enrollment through August 15, 2021. Or enroll in coverage any time of the year during a qualifying life event, like losing health insurance or having a baby.

Pennie™ 1-844-844-8040 or [online](#)

Vaccines for Children Program Offers Free Vaccines

The Pennsylvania Department of Health has a Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program that provides vaccines at no cost to children who do not have health insurance or children whose insurance does not cover immunizations. To learn more about eligibility and providers in your area, families should call the **Pennsylvania Department of Health at 1-877-PA HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)**.

Sources

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