

My Doctor Next Door Back to Health From the Doctor's Office

By K. J. Armann, M.D.

It's that time of year when our children are settling in to a new school year. One place we all have to check into is the doctor's office and this month is a good time to do that. There are forms to be filled out, immunizations to be updated, and physicals to be done.

Most high schools require all athletes to have a physical every year. Some high schools want the exam to be done after June 1, just prior to the new school year being started. Many other sports clubs require an exam before the children can participate in their sport. Please check to see if your child needs an exam. Scheduling these exams in advance is recommended; most pediatric offices are doing many back to school exams in the summer. Remember to bring in all the forms that need to be filled out at the time of your exam or mail the forms to the office prior to your appointment so they can be filled out in a timely manner.

Along with the physical exam comes laboratory tests and immunizations. I recommend school kids get a complete blood count (CBC), lipid panel, and a Vitamin D level. CBC is to look for disease states. Lipid panel is done starting at eleven years old to look for elevated cholesterol and triglycerides, which are associated with several disease states such as heart disease, hypertension (high blood pressure), diabetes, and other medical conditions. I have started routinely ordering vitamin D levels. Because of several reasons including decreased sun exposure, I am seeing about thirty to forty percent of my patients with vitamin D deficiency (see my article,

'Vitamin D and the Sun, *What's the Big Deal*' in the *June Out and About*). If your child has a low level of vitamin D they will need to be started on a supplement of vitamin D.



The State of California requires all children entering public or private elementary, secondary or high school to be vaccinated, this includes childcare centers, day nursery, nursery schools, family day-care homes, developmental centers, and colleges. Vaccine schedules are posted on my website www.kjkidmd.com and also at www.shotsforschool.org. There is also a recommended schedule for kids entering California Colleges and Universities with student housing; this schedule is also on my website, or at www.cdph.ca.gov. Additional information regarding these recommendations can be found at www.getimmunizedca.org.

As a result of recent whooping cough

epidemics, all children entering middle school are required to have a Tdap. This protects them from pertussis (whooping cough), tetanus, and diphtheria. Most children will receive their first dose of meningococcal vaccine (Menactra) at this same office visit. This vaccine protects them from a very dangerous form of meningitis and blood-borne infection seen mostly in teens and young adults. College students living in dorms are at a higher risk for acquiring this disease. Approximately twenty percent or one in five persons who get this disease will die, despite antibiotic treatment.

I am recommending that everyone get a flu shot this year. This year's flu vaccine has protection for four types of flu; last year's vaccine only protected us from three types of flu. This year the vaccine will have two influenza A strains and two influenza B strains.

In all this is a very busy time of year for the medical offices doing back to school physicals. If your child has not already been examined, it is time to call and make an appointment for them.



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