FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: August 5th, 2019
Sent to: County Times Newspaper, Lawton Constitution Newspaper, Comanche County Chronicle Newspaper, KSWO Television, KMGZ Radio, KBZQ Radio
Contact: Cecilia Rosendo (580) 585-6636

Comanche County Health Department: Now is the Time to Vaccinate for School and Day Care

Getting all of the recommended vaccines is one of the most important things a parent can do to protect their child’s health, especially when they are in school or a day care center where disease outbreaks can occur. Whether it’s a baby starting at a new day 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 vaccine records.

“When parents are preparing to send their child to day care, school or college, it’s the perfect time to ensure he or she is up to date on all recommended and required vaccines,” said Regional Director Brandie Combs. “Following the recommended immunization schedule helps prevent against a number of vaccine-preventable diseases.”

Child care facilities, schools and colleges are highly susceptible to outbreaks of infectious diseases. Children can easily transmit illnesses to one another due to poor hand washing, uncovered coughs, and close contact with many people. When children aren’t vaccinated, they are at increased risk for disease and can spread disease to others in their classrooms and communities. This includes babies too young to be fully vaccinated and people with weakened immune systems due to cancer or other health conditions.

The Comanche County Health Department offers all required vaccines for school children and teens 18 years of age and younger at regular immunization clinics to be held from Monday to Friday from 8 am to 5 pm. Parents of children with private health insurance or SoonerCare health insurance are encouraged to take their children to their regular health care provider or clinic to receive these vaccines.

Children entering day care facilities in Oklahoma must also be up-to-date for their age with childhood vaccines. The 2019-2020 Guide to Immunization Requirements in Oklahoma for children in school or day care is available on the Oklahoma State Department of Health website at: https://www.ok.gov/health2/documents/Guide%20to%20Imm%20Reqs%20in%20Ok%20English.pdf.

Kindergarten Students
Children entering kindergarten should be up to date for all immunizations required for school. The standard 4-year-old immunizations provide boosters or additional doses of four vaccines:

- MMR (measles, mumps and rubella vaccine)
- Polio
- DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccines)
- Varicella (Chicken Pox)
The second dose of chickenpox vaccine is recommended, but not required by Oklahoma’s school law.

Children who recently moved to Oklahoma may also need two doses of hepatitis A vaccination, which is required for students in all grades in Oklahoma. Students need at least one dose of hepatitis A vaccine to start school. A second dose is due six to 18 months later.

**Grades 7-12**
Students in grades 7-12 are required to have one dose of Tdap vaccine, which protects against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough). This is necessary for adolescents and adults so they won’t contract whooping cough and infect babies and toddlers.

Parents and teens, both boys and girls, are strongly urged to ask their health care provider for HPV (human papillomavirus) vaccine, which prevents several types of cancer. The immune response to the HPV vaccine is better in pre-teens and can mean better protection for teens. New guidelines for completion of the HPV vaccine series is now two doses separated by 6 – 12 months if the first dose is given before the child’s 15th birthday.

The meningococcal vaccine (MCV4) is also important for adolescent and teen health. The MCV4 vaccine protects against the devastating effects of bacteria that cause meningitis or a life-threatening bloodstream infection. Meningococcal disease is relatively rare, but if contracted, can cause death in less than 48 hours and leave those who survive with life-long problems such as brain damage or limb amputation.

HPV and MCV4 are recommended for all kids at 11-12 years of age with a booster of MCV4 at age 16. The meningococcal vaccine is required for first-time college students who will live in on-campus student housing. College students are also required to have MMR and hepatitis B vaccines.

Another vaccine which is recommended for some adolescents is serogroup B meningococcal vaccine (MenB). It is recommended for children 10 years and older with an increased risk for serogroup B meningococcal infections. The preferred age for immunization of healthy adolescents is 16-18 years of age. Parents should discuss with their child’s provider the child’s meningococcal risk factors, and the potential benefits of MenB vaccination.

For more information about immunizations, call the Comanche County Health Department at (580) 248-5890 or contact your health care provider.

###