

Rush for school vaccinations is on!

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New back-to-school immunizations rules require all kindergartners to have a fourth polio vaccine after their fourth birthday and before starting school August 8. The Lee County Health Department already has seen a 55% increase in its back-to-school patient load from parents bringing in children for vaccinations.

"This change requires a 4th dose of the polio vaccine in a narrower time period than before," said Kim White, immunizations manager. "The Centers for Disease Control has studies showing the vaccine works better when given on this schedule," White explained.

The Lee County Health Department says parents can avoid the longest lines by getting school children up to date on their shots now, in July, at Shots for Tots evening clinics county-wide or daytime at the main office on Michigan Avenue. Children with early birthdays can get immunized now, while children whose fourth birthday doesn't occur until August must wait for the polio booster.

School starts in less than four weeks for Lee County public school students, and all students (new and returning) must have proof of current immunizations to be admitted. Besides missing valuable education time, they will not be able to ride the bus or participate in sports and other extracurricular activities until the school has the DH 680 form showing that their shots were received.

Students entering kindergarten, first, second and third grades need a second vaccine for chicken pox (varicella). Also, students entering seventh, eighth or ninth grades need a Tdap tetanus booster. Parents should also be certain their college bound teens are up-to-date with required and recommended vaccines.

All required immunizations are *free* and offered on a *walk-in* basis, at the Lee County Health Department 3920 Michigan Avenue, 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 1 p.m. – 3 p.m. Friday

Shots for Tots clinics are open according to the following schedule:

Pondella Clinic

83 Pondella Rd.
North Fort Myers, FL 33916
1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month
5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Walk-in Only

First Presbyterian Church

9751 Bonita Beach Rd
Bonita Springs, FL 34135
1st Tuesday of the month
5:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Walk-in Only

Lehigh Acres Clinic

5624 8th Street West, Suite 106
Lehigh Acres, FL 33971
1st Thursday of the month
3rd Tuesday of the month
5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Walk-in Only

"It's important to remind parents that diseases prevented by childhood immunizations are still around, and the very best way to protect your loved ones is to get them vaccinated," said Judith A. Hartner, M.D., M.P.H., M.P.A., director of the Lee County Health Department.

For more information contact the Lee County Health Department's Office of Immunizations at 239-332-9601.