

Date: August 12, 2009

Free immunization clinics for children

The Kittitas County Public Health Department will be holding three **free** immunization clinics around the county this summer to ensure all children are up-to-date with the immunizations required for school entrance. The clinics will be open to any child under age 19, accompanied by a parent or guardian, who needs to receive recommended or required vaccines. The clinics will be held at the following times:

- **Morgan Middle School, Ellensburg, on August 25th, 12 – 1:30 p.m.**
- **Kittitas Secondary School, Kittitas, on September 1st, 5 – 6:30 p.m.**
- **Walter Strom Middle School, Cle Elum, on September 3rd, 2 – 3 p.m.**

Any child can attend any clinic, regardless of school enrollment status or location.

Immunization requirements for school entry vary by grade level. All grades require at least three doses of vaccine that protects against diphtheria and tetanus. A booster dose of Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) is required at age 11 if it has been at least five years since the last dose of tetanus containing vaccine. Other immunizations which may be required include the varicella vaccine, which protects against chickenpox, the polio and hepatitis B vaccines, and MMR to protect against measles, mumps, and rubella. There are several recommended vaccines that will be available, but are not required for school entrance. These include hepatitis A, meningococcal, and HPV vaccines. HPV is available only for girls; it protects against some types of cervical cancer caused by human papillomavirus. A change this year due to state budget cuts means that HPV vaccine will only be available free of charge to girls who do not have private insurance that covers the vaccine.

Ensuring that children are up-to-date with their immunizations is the most effective way to protect against vaccine-preventable illnesses; some of the illnesses that children may gain protection from are very serious and have no cure or treatment. Immunization exemptions for school attendance are allowed for medical, religious, or personal reasons, but the best disease protection is obtained by fully immunizing children. For more information, call Kittitas County Public Health Department at 509-962-7515.

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