

Consider Health in Your Back-to-School Routine

It's back to school time! Many families are shopping for school supplies, buying new shoes, and finding the perfect back pack - readying their students for a new school year. This is also a good time to review your child's health risks, schedule yearly physicals and check if they are up-to-date on recommended and required vaccines.

School and Licensed Child Care Immunizations:

Even if your child isn't scheduled for a physical, make 'review of immunizations' part of your back-to-school routine by contacting your healthcare provider, checking the Nebraska DHHS website for the current [childcare and school immunization laws](#), or by calling our staff at South Heartland District Health Department. Nebraska law requires students in public and private schools to be immunized against the following diseases:

- Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis
- Hepatitis B
- Measles, mumps, and rubella
- Varicella (chicken pox) or documentation of the disease

Parents and/or guardians of children attending Nebraska-licensed childcare programs must provide an immunization record for each child verifying age-appropriate immunization against all of the above diseases, plus age-appropriate immunization against:

- Polio
- Pneumococcal
- Haemophilus Influenzae type b (Hib)

In addition, there are recommended vaccines to help protect children from other preventable diseases. Because all children deserve the opportunity to learn in an environment that is free from preventable disease, we encourage parents and guardians to review which immunizations are recommended for your child, based on their age. For example, immunizations against rotavirus, influenza, COVID-19, HPV and meningococcal can help protect your child from getting these preventable diseases. Call your health care provider or South Heartland District Health Department if you have questions or need more information.

You may also find more information on recommended child and adolescent immunizations at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/child-adolescent.html>.

South Heartland District Health Department offers a monthly Vaccine for Children Immunization Clinic the first Thursday of each month from 12:00 – 6:00 PM. Contact us at 402-462-6211 to see if your child is eligible for this program and to schedule an appointment. For other Vaccine for Children locations in the South Heartland area, visit our website: www.southheartlandhealth.org.

Lead poisoning:

Lead is a toxic metal that has been used in many types of products for hundreds of years. Children and adults can get too much lead in their bodies if they are exposed to lead in their environment. For example, the paint in your home can be a source of lead poisoning because lead-based paint was used in homes until it was banned in 1978. Older homes are more likely to contain lead-based paint. Children living in homes built before 1978 and especially built before 1950 are at higher risk for lead exposure.

DHHS recommends that children living in certain zip code areas be tested for lead poisoning at age 12 months and again at 24 months. Hastings (68901) is included in this list of areas where children are more likely to come in contact with lead in their environment. Women, Infant & Children (WIC) and Medicaid programs also have requirements for participating children to be tested. However, parents in ALL of our South Heartland communities, whether or not they live in a high-risk zip code or are utilizing these programs, should determine whether their child might be at high risk of exposure to lead.

Parents/guardians may use the following short lead exposure questionnaire developed by Nebraska DHHS to determine the risk of lead exposure to their child:

- 1) Does the child live in or often visit a house, daycare, preschool, home of a relative, etc. built before 1950?
- 2) Does the child live in or often visit a house built before 1978 that has been remodeled within the last year?
- 3) Does the child have a brother, sister or playmate with lead poisoning?
- 4) Does the child live with an adult whose job or hobby involves lead?
- 5) Does the child's family use any home remedies or cultural practices that may contain or use lead?
- 6) Is the child included in a special population group, i.e., foreign adoptee, refugee, migrant, immigrant, foster care child?

If the response to any of the six exposure questions is "yes" or "don't know", the child should be tested for lead poisoning.

A child with high blood lead levels may have headaches, restlessness, anemia, weight loss, hearing loss, learning disabilities or other symptoms. Lead may affect the development and functioning of almost all body organs. Since many of the effects of lead poisoning cannot be reversed, it is very important to have your child tested. For more information on Lead Poisoning Prevention visit South Heartland's website: <https://southheartlandhealth.org/what-we-do/environmental/lead-poisoning-information.html>.

South Heartland is happy to help you make sure your children are protected from preventable diseases and lead poisoning so they can be healthy learners. We encourage parents and guardians to include "health" in your back-to-school routines!

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