

## Put “Health” in Your Back-to-School Routine

It’s time to think about children returning back to school! 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 schedule your kiddos’ yearly physicals, make sure they are up-to-date on recommended and required vaccines, that they’ve had a dental screening and cleaning, and to review their other potential health risks.

Vaccinations have prevented babies and children (and also adults!) from harmful or deadly diseases that were once common. Vaccinations help your body create protective antibodies to help fight off infection. It is important to remain up-to-date on vaccinations as some vaccine preventable diseases are still common.

### 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.

The recommended vaccinations can protect children from 16 vaccine-preventable diseases: Diphtheria, Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib), Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Human Papillomavirus (HPV - a major cause of cervical, genital, throat and neck cancers), Influenza, Measles, Meningococcal, Mumps, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Pneumococcal, Polio, Rotavirus, Rubella (German Measles), Tetanus and Varicella (Chicken Pox). Some of these vaccinations are required to attend schools and childcare programs.

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)

Because all children deserve the opportunity to learn and play 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. Call your health care provider or South Heartland

District Health Department if you have questions, need more information, or want to schedule an appointment for your child to get up-to-date on their recommended vaccinations.

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/vpd/vaccines-age.html>.

Vaccinations can be expensive. If your child does not have insurance coverage for vaccines or has Medicaid and is between the ages of 0-18 years, they qualify for the Vaccine for Children program and can receive no cost vaccinations through this program at South Heartland District Health Department. The vaccines themselves are free, but donations are appreciated to help cover the cost of administering the vaccine.

The Vaccine for Children program is also offered through the Clay County Health Department, as well as some other health clinics in the South Heartland area (Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, Webster counties).

South Heartland's Vaccine for Children program is offered through our Hastings/Adams County Immunization Clinic on the first Thursday of each month from 12:00 – 6:00 PM and walk-in clinics every Tuesday afternoon, with evening availability coming soon. 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 program locations in the South Heartland area, visit our website: <https://southheartlandhealth.ne.gov/what-we-do/immunizations/vaccines-for-children-program.html>.

South Heartland is happy to help you make sure your children are protected from preventable diseases so they can be healthy learners and enjoy their school year. To all the parents and guardians with school age children in the South Heartland health district: we encourage you to include “health” in your student’s back-to-school routines by reaching out to us for further information!

*Michele Bever is Executive Director for the South Heartland District Health Department, serving Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties in south central Nebraska. She may be reached at 402-462-6211 or toll free 1-877-238-7595.*