

Jessica Sessions, MD, Associate Medical Director
William F. Ryan Community Health Center

Back-2-School

It's that time of year again...Back to School! This can be a very hectic time for parents. At the Ryan Network, we want to make sure your child is ready for school. In fact, from August 13th through September 7th, we are providing "back to school" physicals without an appointment! In addition, we will complete the required school forms, and your child will walk away with a free gift!

WHY IS A YEARLY PHYSICAL FOR YOUR CHILD IMPORTANT?

It is an opportunity for your practitioner to:

- review your child's medical history and lab work
- do screenings for hearing or vision problems
- complete a "504 form" that you should bring with you to the center if your child has a medical condition such as asthma, diabetes or attention deficit disorder (ADD). This will ensure that he/she receives the care, services and accommodations they need during the school day.
- make sure that your child is up to date on the "vaccines" required by the New York State Department of Health which your child must have in order to attend school.

There are other important vaccines which are not required currently, but are recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, that you should also discuss with your child's practitioner. These include a second dose of varicella vaccine; the menactra vaccine to protect against meningococcal meningitis (recommended for adolescents beginning at age 11 or 12); and the vaccine which can help protect females from the effects of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), such as cervical cancer (recommended for females from 9 to 26 years of age, and given in 3 doses).

The physical is also a time to screen your child's nutritional status and calculate his/her body mass index (BMI) to determine if their weight is appropriate for their age and height. To encourage a healthy weight and decrease the risks of obesity, it is important for all children to get daily exercise, limit screen time (television, video games and computer), eat fruits and vegetables, and limit the amount of juice and sugar sweetened beverages he/she consumes. DID YOU KNOW - each can of soda contains about 10 teaspoons of sugar and 150 calories? Drinking just ONE a day increases a child's risk of obesity by 60%!

ADDITIONAL HELPFUL RECOMMENDATIONS:

At your visit, discuss with your practitioner how your child is doing in school and at home. If there are specific concerns you or your child's teacher have, let your practitioner know so that he/she can help you decide if your child needs further evaluation or referral regarding behavior, learning or attention problems.

Another important reminder for children returning to school is to choose a backpack with wide padded shoulder straps and a padded back. A backpack should be packed light, with heavier items closest to the center of the back. Remind your child to always use both straps, since slinging your backpack over one shoulder can strain muscles and increase curvature of the spine.



AND REMEMBER! Even after your child has received his/her physical, you can always call or make an appointment to discuss issues that arise during the school year, or that may be of concern to you or your family.