

VACCINATIONS ARE CRITICAL TO CHILD WELL-BEING



HEALTHCHEK SERVICES ARE COVERED BY MEDICAID AND INCLUDE:



Preventive checkups for newborns, infants, and toddlers.



Twelve complete medical exams during a baby's first two and a half years of life: at birth, 3-5 days of age and at 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 24, and 30 months. After that, children receive yearly exams.

Healthchek provides a robust list of benefits for babies and children:

- ✓ Age appropriate physical exams
- ✓ Reviews of physical and mental development
- ✓ Vision, dental, and hearing screenings
- ✓ Nutrition checks
- ✓ Developmental screenings
- ✓ Laboratory tests for certain ages
- ✓ Lead testing
- ✓ Immunizations
- ✓ Medically necessary follow-up care
- ✓ Inpatient or outpatient hospital care
- ✓ Clinic visits
- ✓ Prescription drugs
- ✓ Health education

As we enter the month of May and our second month of social distancing in an effort to flatten the curve of the COVID-19 pandemic, a new danger threatens to raise its head.

Although children haven't typically been directly affected by COVID-19, many aspects of their lives have been disrupted, including medical care. There is a growing concern that parents are postponing the regularly scheduled immunizations for their children out of fear of exposing them to the coronavirus or because of limited appointment availability with their pediatricians.

If children aren't receiving immunizations, especially during the first 18 months of life, a significant vaccine gap could occur. This vaccine gap jeopardizes not only the unvaccinated child, but immunocompromised children and adults who can't get vaccinated for health reasons. A vaccine gap could

threaten entire communities by leading to a resurgence of preventable diseases like measles, mumps, rubella, and pertussis. Ohio was forward thinking when they took steps to expand telehealth during this public health crisis. Many aspects of a child's exam can be done through telehealth—but immunizations require a visit to the pediatrician's office.

"The risk of missing well care for some children is far greater than the risk of COVID-19 infection" said Kate Krueck, MD, FAAP. "Risks of school failure in grade school children; depression, anxiety and suicidality in adolescents; and asthma exacerbation related to spring allergies are all concerns pediatricians can help families address, but we need to see our patients to do so."

Parents need to hear directly from pediatricians, whom they trust, about the importance of vaccinations and the safety of both the vaccines and bringing their children in for their shots.

According to Ohio Medicaid, children under the age of 21 enrolled in Medicaid have access to Healthchek. Healthchek is Ohio's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) program that covers 12 comprehensive well-child check-ups during a child's first 30 months, and subsequent yearly exams. Services includes physical exams, developmental screenings, and immunizations.

Now is the time for Ohio health leaders to prioritize childhood immunization with the message that vaccines give children the protection they need to live long and healthy lives and keep our communities safe and well.