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SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS
COMMUNICATIONS

NEWS

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BACK-TO-SCHOOL HEALTH AND SAFETY REMINDERS

Soon, children across Sedgwick County head back to school. With the threat of a pandemic flu this fall, more than ever before, we are reminded of the need to take certain precautions to ensure they enjoy another healthy, safe school year.

Hand Washing

The most important and easiest thing we can do to keep from getting sick and spreading illness is to clean our hands. Hands are the most exposed part of the body to germs.

Remind children to wash their hands before eating, when sick, and after:

- coughing, sneezing, or blowing nose
- handling garbage
- playing with pets
- using the bathroom

Running hands briefly under cool water is not enough. Washing your hands should take 15-20 seconds. Tell young kids to sing "Happy Birthday" twice while they wash with soap.

Immunizations

Immunizations are important for not only individual health but the health of the entire class. This is because vaccines often reduce the spread of contagious diseases. Due to the health benefits, many vaccines are required for children prior to attending school. When taking a child for his or her immunizations, bring their shot record.

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This year besides the required vaccinations, parents should think seriously about getting their children immunized against both the seasonal flu and the novel h1n1 (swine) flu. Seasonal flu vaccines may be available as early as September. Novel h1n1 (swine) flu vaccines are expected to be available mid-October. If you have questions about flu vaccines or other immunizations, call your health care provider or the Sedgwick County Health Department at 660-7300.

Physicals

Back-to-school physicals are also important for your child's health. If your student is a school athlete, he or she will be required to have a sports physical to participate. Even if your child is not an athlete, this is a good time of year to schedule annual physicals. Annual exams ensure your child is healthy and that potential problems are identified early. Contact your health care provider to schedule a physical.

Nutrition

Just as bad habits start early, so do healthy ones. Pack your child's lunch or pre-purchase school meals, instead of giving your children money to buy their own. This can prevent kids from buying unhealthy food. If your child's school allows soda and/or energy drinks to be purchased or consumed, send your child with a healthier option.

General Safety

Regarding safety, it is important citizens are aware of crosswalks. During the summer, drivers grow accustomed to maintaining regular speed through school crossings. Accident prevention begins with anticipation of what might be on the road. Drivers from both directions should stop when a stop sign is extended on a school bus.

Lastly, review emergency information with children, such as phone numbers, addresses and meeting places. Young children should not be left unattended before or after school. Organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club and the YMCA give children a safe, fun place to go after school and many schools offer a latchkey program that gives parents an alternative to day care for school-age children.

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