



Orange County

ATTENTION

STEVEN M. NEUHAUS
County Executive

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

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Commissioner of Health

May 14, 2022

PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO AND POST CONSPICUOUSLY IN PEDIATRIC, FAMILY PRACTICE, PRIMARY CARE, EMERGENCY ROOM, INTERNAL MEDICINE, URGENT CARE, INFECTIOUS DISEASE, OB/GYN, LABORATORIES, HOSPITALS, CONGREGATE LIVING SETTINGS, SCHOOLS, PHARMACIES, SCHOOL AND EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES, DAY CARE, SUMMER CAMPS, AND ORANGE COUNTY RESIDENTS.

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT #5
Childhood Immunization Update in Orange County

In 2018, Orange County was one of two counties in New York State (NYS) at the epicenter of the largest measles outbreak in the United States since 1992. Since that time, the NYS Legislature removed the non-medical exemption from childhood vaccinations and prohibited children who are not adequately vaccinated from attending school. The most recent data analysis from the NYSDOH Bureau of Immunization revealed that only **37.39%** of two-year-old Orange County residents are appropriately vaccinated as of the end of 2021. This is significantly lower than in NYS (outside of NYC) where 62.71% of all two-year-old residents are appropriately vaccinated. This is also a considerable decrease from 2020 where 40.75% of two-year-old residents were vaccinated in Orange County. This low vaccination rate presents a communicable disease risk to the health of children of Orange County. It is paramount to prioritize your patient's compliance with NYS Law pertaining to the age-appropriate vaccination schedule.

UNICEF and WHO "warn of perfect storm conditions for measles outbreaks affecting children" and reported: "worldwide measles cases increased by 79% in the first 2 months of 2022, compared to the same period in 2021. WHO and UNICEF warn conditions are ripe for serious outbreaks of vaccine-preventable illnesses. Pandemic-related disruptions, increasing inequalities in access to vaccines, and the diversion of resources from routine immunization are leaving too many children without protection against measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases. The risk for large outbreaks has increased as communities relax social distancing practices and other preventive measures for COVID-19 implemented during the height of the pandemic. In addition, with millions of people being displaced due to conflicts and crises including in Ukraine, Ethiopia, Somalia and Afghanistan, disruptions in routine immunization and COVID-19 vaccination services, lack of clean water and sanitation, and overcrowding increase the risk of vaccine-preventable disease outbreak. As measles is very contagious, cases tend to show up quickly when vaccination levels decline."

The May 2020 CDC report found a troubling drop in routine childhood vaccinations due in part by families staying at home throughout the initial phases of the pandemic response. CDC and the American

Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend that children remain current with their well-child appointments and routine vaccination. Timely immunization is critical to provide protection against potentially life-threatening diseases, as well as instrumental in preventing future communicable disease outbreaks in our community given the global prevalence of active infection and the increase in potential transmission in areas of low vaccination.

Orange County Department of Health (OCDOH) has seen an increased number of children presenting to our immunization clinics, in the spring of 2022, who are at risk of exclusion from school due to inadequate immunization. It is therefore imperative that, as healthcare providers, you encourage age-appropriate vaccination, and “catch-up” vaccination of older children presenting in your practices from other locations at every opportunity and as soon as possible.

Following disruptions from COVID-19, please continue to encourage families to stay on track for routine checkups and age-appropriate immunization of their children. On-time vaccination is critical to help provide protection against 14 diseases with recommended childhood vaccinations, which include, and are not limited to: Polio; Measles; Whooping Cough; Pneumococcal Disease; Rotavirus; Mumps; Chicken Pox; Diphtheria.

It is paramount to prioritize your patient’s compliance with NYS Law pertaining to the age-appropriate vaccination schedule.

If you have additional questions, please call OCDOH at 845-291-2330.