



Information for the Parent Community

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MARYLAND SCHOOLS ANNOUNCE NEW IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS

The Howard County Public School System is joining other organizations across the state to inform parents about new school immunization requirements that call for ALL students in preschool programs and kindergarten through 9th grade to be immunized against hepatitis B and varicella. School officials and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene are urging parents of adolescents to make sure their child is immunized against these diseases and that updated vaccination records are provided to their school.

Immunization is an important part of keeping people of all ages healthy. Despite the availability of safe and effective immunizations, thousands of cases of vaccine-preventable diseases occur in the United States every year. Consider the following facts about hepatitis B and varicella:

- ◆ About 80,000 new cases of hepatitis B occur in the United States each year. Of these cases, 8% strike adolescents. The hepatitis B virus is 100 times more infectious than HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.
- ◆ Chickenpox can be very serious in adolescents and adults. Compared to young children, the risk of serious illness and death can be up to three times higher for unimmunized teens and young adults and up to twenty times greater for people over 30.

Immunization is a community effort that is proven to save lives. For this reason, Maryland schools, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Maryland Childhood Immunization Partnership and local healthcare providers are working together to make sure that these important school requirements are met.

Immunizations should begin at birth and continue throughout lifespan. By staying current with immunizations, we protect our families, ourselves, and the community.

Atholton High School urges all parents to contact your doctor or local health department to make sure your adolescent is appropriately immunized.

If you have any further questions, contact your child's Health Room.