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BACK TO SCHOOL 19



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## COVID-19 isn't the only vaccine kids need this year

BY MELISSA BAKER, ROBERT OUIMETTE  
AND JENNIFER YOUNG  
Progress Guest Writers

As families prepare to send their kids back to in-person classes, there might be one essential item parents still need to add to the back-to-school list - immunizations. Immunizations are shots that children and adults take to protect themselves and others against serious illnesses. Staying up to date on immunizations helps keep communities safe from an outbreak of a life-threatening disease.

Unfortunately, millions of people fell behind their vaccination schedule during the last year, as they could not physically visit the doctor or put off well-checks during the worst of the pandemic.

While telehealth appointments are extremely valuable, it is still important to make time to see your doctor in person to make sure you and your family are up to date on these vaccinations.

Do you know the last time you or your children received their booster tetanus shot? Or if you and your loved ones are still protected against hepatitis? It is important to keep up to date with these vaccines to receive the best protection against deadly viruses.

If you are still unsure why vaccinations are so necessary, consider the 1.5 million people who die from vaccine-preventable diseases every year.

According to the World Health Organization, around 86% of children around the world are vaccinated. These vaccinated people prevent any-



where from two to three million people from dying each year.

If 90-95 percent of children were immunized against preventable diseases - millions of lives could be saved.

Keeping up to date with your and your family's vaccinations helps the population as a whole maintain herd immunity - a phenomenon that the world is attempting to reach to be protected against COVID-19. With teachers and kids heading back to the classrooms this fall, it has never been more important to take stock of your health and receive proper care.

After more than a year of physically distant learning, teachers are cautiously excited to return to the classroom. Yet parents remain anxious about what to expect in the new school year.

Among the many challenges the pandemic brought onto families with school-age children, coming home

with exposure to a potentially life-threatening disease should be the least of your worries this upcoming year. Do your part by checking in with your doctor to confirm you and your family are protected.

If you are unsure of your vaccine history, you can request a copy of your immunization records from your primary care doctor. Upon pulling up your records, they may have you schedule an appointment for a vaccine or booster shot.

If you do not have a primary care physician or are unsure of your previous health history, there are many healthcare resources like Jewish Family & Children's Service that are open and ready to connect you to the right kind of care.

Melissa Baker, Robert Ouimette and Jennifer Young are site directors at Jewish Family & Children's Service's integrated healthcare centers. For more information, visit the JFCS website at [jfcsaz.org](http://jfcsaz.org).

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