IMMUNIZATION UPDATE

It’s that time of year again. As you know, the Department of Public Instruction requires schools to notify parents if their child is not up-to-date with the required vaccinations. **The first notice will be sent home with students on Wednesday, September 15.**

Our St. Marcus parents doing remarkably well in that respect. Despite the inconveniences of Covid, this year we have only 88 students (out of around a thousand) who need to have their vaccinations brought up to date. As is usual, most of those students are Middle School students (52 out of 88) who need their tDap, a combination of Tetanus and Pertussis (whooping cough) vaccines required for 6th graders. We have received questions in the past about why this is required. Here’s why.

Tetanus is not a communicable disease like chickenpox or the flu. The bacteria lives in the soil and survives without oxygen. There is no cure and 5000 people around the world, mostly in developing countries with limited access to vaccines, die of tetanus every year. Any break in the skin can allow it into the body which is why ERs administer tetanus to anyone with cuts, abrasions or burns.

Whooping cough is, however, highly communicable and, because of multiple outbreaks in dormitories, some colleges are requiring the vaccine for students living in dorms. Once your middle-schooler has this vaccine they are good for 10 years.

St. Marcus sends out the Legal Notices generated by the Wisconsin Immunization Registry (WIR) twice during the first six weeks of school and if not up-to-date 10 days after the second notice students are not allowed to return to school until that is corrected.

Walgreens will administer vaccines to children older than 7 years but younger children will need to be seen by their Healthcare Provider or the MHD Health Centers. It’s best to call ahead to make sure that they have the vaccine you need in stock (not generally an issue). Take the paperwork you received from us to the pharmacy or doctor. They will document the vaccine and you can then turn the paper into the school office. While pharmacies are generally very timely in entering vaccines given into the WIR, doctor’s offices and healthcare provider clinics are often not so efficient so it is important to bring the completed paperwork back to school.

Our former School Nurse, Kary Wiesler, is managing the immunizations for us this year. If you have questions please email her at kary.wiesler@stmarcus.org.