Back to School Student Health Tips

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- **Physical Exam** should be up to date with the student's primary care provider. An exam is required by many schools and at college entrance, especially for students participating in athletics.

- **Immunizations** for all children should be done according to the CDC/ACIP schedule. New are recommendations in some states, such as New York, for meningitis vaccine (Menactra), two doses, one by 7th grade, the second by 12th grade. There also is a new vaccine(s) for meningitis serogroup B, not covered in Menactra, which is now recommended at age 16 - 18. Both vaccines protect against potentially fatal strains of the bacteria meningococcus. There also is a new variety of the HPV vaccine, Gardisil, which now covers nine strains of the virus (previously four). This vaccine series is started at age 11-12, but can be given up to age 26.

- **Eye exam** is recommended yearly. Vision correction as needed.

- **Dental exams and cleanings** every 6-12 months.

- **Gynecological exams** for sexually active teenagers/young women yearly to provide STI screening, and a discussion about birth control options.

- **Prescription medications**, especially for college students who are going to school away from home. Arrange for an adequate supply of medication to start the school year and for prescriptions to be transferred to a local pharmacy for refills. This can now be accomplished easily due to electronic prescribing. But parents must be aware of potential prescribing issues if their student is on a controlled medication such as those for attention deficit disorder (ADD/ADHD), which are tightly controlled by federal and state regulations. These medications can now be refilled electronically by the student's primary care provider, or psychiatrist in some states, but arrangements for regular refills must be coordinated by the patient/parent and the prescriber.

- **Over-the-counter medications** are good to have around at the beginning of the year. A supply of the commonly used OTC medications can be convenient when needed: Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin) for pain and fever, decongestants such as pseudoephredrine (Sudafed), antihistamines such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl), loratadine (Claritin), fexofenadine (Allegra), or cetirizine (Zyrtec).

- **Awareness and preparation for allergies to foods, and insect stings**. If a student has history of allergy, especially severe or life-threatening reactions, the student should always have an epinephrine autoinjector. Tree nut and peanut allergies can cause life-threatening reactions and the student must always be prepared.

- **Personal protective equipment** such as helmets for bike-riding and skate-boarding, along with goggles, and appropriate pads for sports, are important to bring to school.

- **Sun block** is required to protect a student's skin from the sun and they should have a good supply of at least an SPF 30 sunblock. It should be applied/reapplied every 1.5 - 2 hours and after being in the water.

- **Health insurance review**. Parents should review their health insurance policy for coverage in the region the student is attending school. If there is no or poor coverage, consider purchasing a policy from the school, if offered, or from the New York State Exchange (www.nyustateofhealth.ny.gov).