Florida Health News

Back-to-School Checklists Should Include COVID Vaccinations

by the We Can Do This COVID-19 Public Education Campaign

(NAPS)—The new school year is quickly approaching. In addition to buying pencils and notebooks and putting school clothes in order, getting kids vaccinated against COVID-19 is an essential step for getting back into the classroom. All children 6 months and older are eligible for COVID vaccines, and children ages 5 and older who have already been vaccinated are eligible for a booster for continued protection.

"Being in school, interacting with other students and teachers, and participating in extracurricular activities are important to the overall well-being of kids," said Dr. Kenneth Alexander, Chief of Infectious Diseases at Nemours Children's Health in Orlando, Florida. "Vaccinations are the best way to protect kids of all ages from COVID, and the best way to make sure they stay engaged in the classroom and activities they need and enjoy."

Parents should know that getting children vaccinated will:

- **Protect their child.** Getting vaccinated can help prevent serious illness and keep children learning in-person for the entire school year. COVID vaccines were developed with safety as a top priority, and side effects are generally mild, if they occur at all.
- **Protect the whole family, including vulnerable members of the household.** Getting vaccinated protects children, relatives, and other care providers in the household, as well as other friends and loved ones children spend time with.
- **Help avoid interruptions to in-person learning.** Asymptomatic, vaccinated close contacts may not need to quarantine at home following an exposure to someone with COVID. Getting vaccinated helps students and staff remain safely in school.

Floridians can give kids a shot at a safer school year with a COVID vaccination.

- **Help prevent extracurriculars, sports, and other activities from getting canceled.** Activities like sports, band, and chorus can be safer and more likely to continue uninterrupted if all participants are up to date with COVID vaccines.
- **Allow children to keep doing the things they love.** Getting vaccinated can keep children from missing out on the fun of childhood—like sleepovers, birthday parties, sporting events, and more.

As children get back to the classroom, they may be exposed to COVID more often. Parents can consider providing their child a comfortable, well-fitting mask to wear for additional protection. Parents should also keep kids home and get them tested if they have symptoms of COVID or have been exposed to someone who tested positive.

Vaccines are available at no cost to everyone age 6 months or older living in the United States, no matter their immigration or health insurance status.

Learn More

For more information and to find a vaccine, visit www.vaccines.gov.