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Stay Ahead of the Curve: Doctor Urges Scheduling Back-to-School Checkups in Early Summer

SPRINGFIELD – When you think of summer, back-to-school checkups may not come to mind as quickly as swimsuits and backyard barbecues, but health experts say that's exactly when parents should schedule yearly exams.

State law requires physicals for students entering kindergarten, sixth and ninth grades, college or any student who is new to the state to be complete by Oct. 15, said [Rajesh Govindaiah](#), MD, senior vice president and chief medical officer for Memorial Health System. Athletes also must receive yearly exams. Calling early ensures your child will receive the necessary immunizations to begin school and will help avoid unnecessary delays.

With 14 locations in central Illinois, [Memorial Physician Services](#) has pediatricians and family medicine physicians who are available to provide this service. Physician offices are located in Springfield, Jacksonville, Lincoln, Petersburg and Chatham.

A back-to-school checkup for a kindergartner consists of immunizations for diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, poliomyelitis, measles, rubella, mumps and varicella (given in combined doses). Your pediatrician or family medicine physician will also check your child's hearing, vision, height, weight and physical coordination to ensure proper development.

Sixth- and ninth-graders may receive vaccinations to guard against the human papillomavirus, tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis and meningitis. The checkup also includes a full-body exam and evaluation of nutritional status and physical activity.

“These mandatory examinations also serve another valuable purpose in allowing physicians to identify and treat conditions more promptly,” Govindaiah says. “For example, childhood obesity is a growing concern as it leads to adult obesity and associated health problems as an adult, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.”

For teenagers, your doctor will likely address psychosocial behaviors and ask about cigarettes, drugs, alcohol and sexual activity.

While annual back-to-school checkups are not required for every grade, they are still the best way to maintain a clean bill of health for your child. “Parents should also consider annual examinations to help identify health conditions that parents themselves may not recognize,” Govindaiah says.

One of the largest primary care physician networks in central Illinois, [Memorial Physician Services](#), an affiliate of [Memorial Health System](#), has more than 50 physicians and 400 employees who provide more than 250,000 patient visits each year.

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