

HEALTH MATTERS

For Your Health

Season for vaccinations

With the back-to-school season here, it's time to schedule vaccinations – for parents and children.

Vaccines play a major role in preventing and protect-



BY LARRY LUCAS

ing adults and children against infections and diseases. They work by fooling our immune system into thinking that a real infection is in our bodies. Then, if we are exposed to the infection at a later date, the immune system is already prepared to protect our bodies against it. Side effects are usually short-term and not nearly as serious as the diseases or infections they protect us against.

Vaccines are particularly critical for young children. If you're the parent of a young child, it can seem like you are at the doctor every week for routine check-ups and scheduled vaccines or blood tests. Understandably, the process can be stressful but keeping up with the prescribed vaccine schedule is critically important. Without vaccinations, childhood diseases most of us haven't heard about in decades – like whooping cough, measles and

polio – could come back.

Some parents have mistakenly been lead to believe that there is a connection between vaccines and autism – though a 2009 federal court ruling and countless scientific studies have found no connection between the two – and as a result have refused vaccinations for their children. The consequences of inaction can be serious and far reaching. For example, earlier this year, an investigation by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that a measles outbreak in San Diego was fueled by kids whose parents refused to vaccinate them, thus endangering other children too young to be vaccinated.

But vaccines aren't just for kids – and some of the vaccines you received as a child require a second dose. According to the CDC, adults need a second dose, or a booster, of

certain vaccines that lose their effectiveness overtime. Some of these boosters include tetanus – which is recommended every 10 years – and whooping cough. During your next visit to the doctor's office, be sure to ask what vaccines you'll need in the next year and schedule them, if necessary.

As we head into fall, don't forget the vaccination you and your children need every year: an influenza – or flu – shot. Not only does it protect against the flu, but it also helps prevent more serious health issues like pneumonia that can result from the flu.

Vaccines play an important role in keeping America's children healthy as they begin a new school year.

Larry Lucas is a retired vice president for Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America.

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Suicides Higher Than Average

State looks at risk factors

Oregon's suicide rate is 35 percent higher than the national average. The rate is 15.2 suicides per 100,000 people compared to the national rate of 11.3 per 100,000.

After decreasing in the 1990s, suicide rates have been increasing significantly since 2000, according to a new report, "Suicides in Oregon: Trends and Risk Factors," from Oregon Public Health. The report also details recommendations to prevent the number of suicides in the state.

"Suicide is one of the most persistent yet preventable public health problems. It is the leading cause of death from injuries – more than even from car crashes. Each year 550 people in Oregon die from suicide and 1,800 people are hospitalized for non-fatal attempts," said Lisa Millet, principal investigator.

The single most identifiable risk factor associated with suicide is depression. Many people are able to manage their depression; however, stress and crisis can overwhelm their ability to cope successfully.

Stresses such as from job loss, loss of home, loss of family and friends, life transitions and also the stress veterans can experience returning home from deployment – all increase the likelihood of suicide among those who are already at risk.

"Many people often keep their depression a secret for fear of discrimination.

Unfortunately, families, communities, businesses, schools and other institutions often discriminate against people with depression or other mental illness. These people will continue to die needlessly unless they have support and effective community-based mental health care," said Millet.

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