ST. MARY'S COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Meenakshi G. Brewster, MD, MPH - Health Officer

Administration, Records & Health Services: 301 – 475 – 4330
Environmental Health: 301 – 475 – 4321
Medical Assistance Transportation: 301 – 475 – 4296
Maryland Relay Service: 1 – 800 – 735 – 2258
Email: smchd.healthdept@maryland.gov

November 5, 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant challenges for our families, community, and health care delivery system. Thanks to your continued support of mitigation strategies such as vaccination of those age-eligible, masking indoors, social distancing, and better ventilation/air filtration, we have been able to work together to try to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our schools while reinstating in-person learning.

Unfortunately, the continued spread of the Delta variant has resulted in a surge of COVID-19 cases in children over the past several months. While most COVID-19 infections in children are associated with mild symptoms, COVID-19 cases in children can also result in hospitalizations, deaths, MIS-C (inflammatory syndromes) and long-term complications, such as "Long COVID," in which symptoms can linger for months. Additionally, a COVID-19 infected child even with mild/no symptoms can pass the infection to others, including siblings, teachers, and grandparents.

Getting vaccinated is the most effective way we have to protect children from COVID-19 illness and contribute to decreasing the spread of COVID-19 in our community. In clinical trials, vaccine side effects in children were mild and similar to those seen in adults and with other childhood vaccines. The most common side effect was a sore arm for 1-3 days. Over 11 million adolescents age 12-17 have already safely received the COVID-19 vaccine (at a higher dose than what is used for 5-11 year-olds).

The FDA has authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (*Comirnaty®*) for emergency use in children ages 5 through 11. To best protect the health of our children and community, the St. Mary's County Health Department (SMCHD) will be offering school-located COVID-19 vaccination clinics for students (age 5-11) at each St. Mary's County public elementary school during the week of November 15, 2021.

If you would like for your child to receive a COVID-19 vaccine at their school, please complete a parent consent as instructed below. The COVID-19 vaccine for children (age 5-11) is a two-dose primary series, 3 weeks apart, but is a lower dose (10 micrograms) than that used for individuals 12 years of age and older (30 micrograms). SMCHD will return onsite in December to administer COVID-19 vaccine second doses.

Parent Consent

1. Go to smchd.org/covid-19-vaccine-kids
2. Find **School-Based Youth Clinics** under **COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments**
3. Click on the name of **your child's school** (please ensure you have selected the correct school)
4. Complete the registration information and parent consent for your child

Please Note

- **DO NOT schedule a COVID-19 vaccine appointment through SMCHD if your child has had a history of severe allergy** (anaphylaxis, hives, trouble breathing, or angioedema) to injectable medication/therapy or to any type of vaccine. Consult with your child's primary care doctor or allergy/immunology specialist and visit smchd.org/covid-19-vaccine-allergy for more information.
  - Some parents may also choose to seek medical evaluation prior to scheduling a COVID-19 vaccine appointment if their child has a history of severe allergic reaction to a food item, bee sting, or latex.
- Parents will not be able to be present during vaccine administration at the school-located vaccine clinics but will need to provide consent in advance.
- SMCHD provides the COVID-19 vaccine free of charge to the patient. Insurance is not required. There is no out of pocket cost, copay, or deductible.
- After vaccination, some persons will experience short-term symptoms (1 – 3 days) of muscle soreness, fatigue, headache, or fever/chills.
- Second doses will be administered at participating schools during the week of December 6th.

For more information on the COVID-19 vaccine for kids, resources for parents, and other SMCHD COVID-19 vaccine clinic options (special events, drive-thru, etc.) please visit smchd.org/covid-19-vaccine-kids or call SMCHD at (301) 475-4330. COVID-19 vaccine for children may also become available locally through our partners at private doctor's offices and pharmacies.

Sincerely,

Meenakshi Brewster, MD, MPH, FAAFP
St. Mary's County Health Officer