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Vaccines could be the difference between life and death for a child

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This year the U.S. has seen the worst outbreak of whooping cough in more than 50 years. In fact, it has reached epidemic levels in many states and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the number of cases reported is already twice as many as last year. With kids getting ready to head back to school, the numbers of children affected or killed by this disease could continue to rise if children aren't vaccinated.

"Vaccinating our children against whooping cough and other illnesses is the best way we can protect them," said Andrew Bonwit, pediatric infectious disease expert at Loyola University Health System. "The next best defense we have for children is good hand-washing hygiene, and also not sending children to school, day-care or afterschool programs if they are sick."

Whooping cough is only one of numerous potentially deadly illnesses that can be effectively diminished by vaccination schedules. In addition to keeping kids safe from these diseases, vaccines also can help when diagnosing a sick child.

"When your child gets sick, being fully vaccinated helps your doctor simplify the evaluation and can lead to a quicker, more accurate diagnosis," Bonwit said.

To help children succeed in school, parents make sure their children have the supplies they will need for the classroom. Just as important is ensuring their children's bodies have what they need to keep them safe

from infectious diseases.

“Though no one likes to get shots, vaccines are an integral part of keeping kids and our community safe. They work to safeguard children from illnesses and death caused by infectious diseases and protect our kids by helping prepare their bodies to fight often serious and potentially deadly diseases,” said Dr. Heidi Renner, primary-care physician at Loyola University Health System.

Vaccines have helped to nearly eradicate many of the diseases that were leading causes of death in children only a few decades ago. Renner shared the main immunizations kids need before heading off to school.

When entering kindergarten your child should receive the following vaccinations:

- Measles, Mumps and Rubella, better known as MMR
- Polio
- Diptheria/Pertussis (whooping cough)
- Chicken Pox

Most likely your child received these immunizations as an infant. This second round of shots boosts the immunity. So, in sixth grade your child should receive:

- Chicken pox booster, if your child has not had two by this time
- Meningitis
- Tetanus booster

If not given in sixth grade, your child will need the meningitis and tetanus booster before entering high school. Many colleges are requiring

students get the meningitis vaccine. Many schools also are requiring a flu shot, so talk to your school about that as well.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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