

April 21, 2014



## High school seniors urged to get free vaccines for college now

*After graduation the cost rises to more than \$300*

SARASOTA COUNTY — Local public health and school officials urge high school seniors to get their immunizations updated before they graduate in early June.

The vaccines are available for free at the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) clinics in Sarasota and North Port.

All colleges and universities require proof of updated vaccines, with no exclusion for religious exemptions. Vaccines are only free while the student is enrolled in school or younger than 19 years old through the federally funded Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. After high school graduation, the cost of vaccines for those who are no longer eligible for the VFC program can exceed \$300. By acting now, families can save money, meet college requirements, and avoid the last-minute rush in the summer.



The recommended vaccines offer safe and effective protection against the most common and serious forms of bacterial [meningitis](#), [Tetanus](#), [Diphtheria and Pertussis \(whooping cough\)](#) and [Human Papillomavirus \(HPV\)](#). The protection offered through some vaccines wanes over time, so certain vaccines need to be repeated to maintain an adequate level of immunity.

When young people are current on their vaccines, regardless of whether or not they are college-bound, it reduces the likelihood throughout their lifetime that they will acquire vaccine-preventable diseases.

High school seniors who do not plan to attend college may through their work, hobbies, personal risk factors, or as young parents be at risk for getting or spreading vaccine-preventable diseases to others, including infants who are too young to be vaccinated. When these diseases occur, they can result in expensive hospitalization, life-long disabilities and, in some cases, death.

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“From a public health standpoint, the entire community benefits when there is greater vaccine coverage,” said DOH-Sarasota School Health Supervisor Linda Glover. “In addition, you’ll save hundreds of dollars by getting vaccines now instead of waiting until after graduation.”

Health officials say that early morning hours are usually best for [walk-in immunizations](#). Parents must accompany those younger than 18 years old. Please bring previous shot record if available.

Immunizations are available at these locations (Monday-Friday):

William L. Little Health & Human Services Center  
2200 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota  
Walk-in services begin at 7:30 a.m.  
Call for [hours](#) or to request an appointment  
941-861-2900

North Port Health Center  
6950 Outreach Way, North Port  
Walk-in services begin at 7 a.m.  
Call for [hours](#)  
941-861-3864

For additional details, please call the School Health Office at 941-927-9000, ext. 32101. Parents can also visit [www.sarasotahealth.org](http://www.sarasotahealth.org) or the school district website, [www.sarasotacountyschools.net](http://www.sarasotacountyschools.net).

-30-

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