

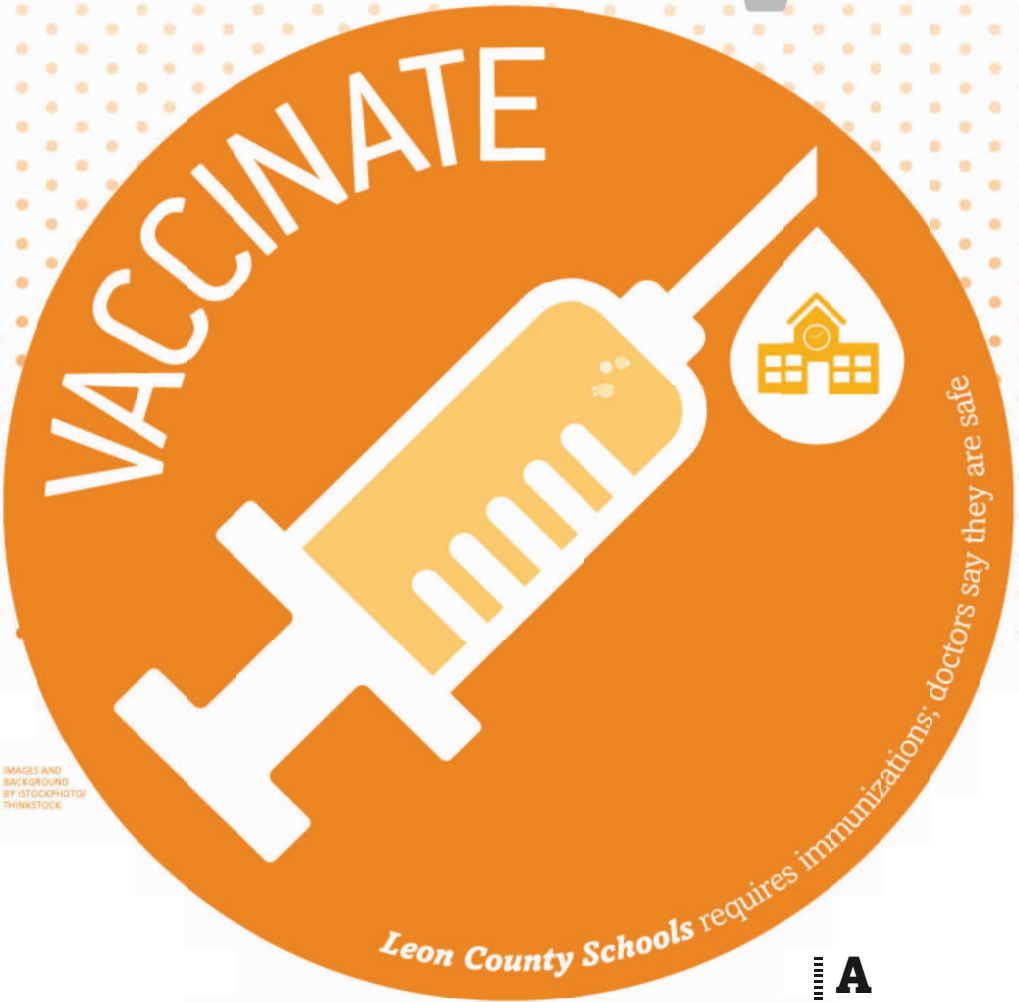
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LOCAL

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HEALTH & FITNESS



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By **Jordan Culver**
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Students are required to submit proof of immunization before setting foot in any school in Florida; however, plenty of parents still have reservations regarding whether or not to make sure their kids are guarded against certain diseases.

According to the Florida Department of Health in Leon County, children are required to be vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio,



DEMOCRAT FILES
Dr. Amanda Davis

measles, mumps, chicken pox and varicella before entering seventh grade.

Many of these vaccines can be administered before a child is ready for kindergarten. However, Dr. Amanda Davis, a family physician with Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare, said parents frequently voice concerns about the safety of vaccinations. "We have parents who say, 'OK. You recommended this,

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.....
we'll get that," she said. "But we also have numerous parents that have concerns. They see things on the news or read things on various websites that links to autism are suspected. As a medical professional I fully recommend immunizations."

August is recognized as National Immunization Awareness Month by the National Public

See **VACCINES** » 3C

A spirited walk

Move.Tallahassee.com is taking a walk on the Florida State University campus.



Vaccines

Continued » 1C

Health Information Coalition and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC recommends parents get immunizations for the children by age 2. They also encourage college students and adults to make sure their immunizations and boosters are up-to-date.

In Leon County Schools, the rules are clear: A child entering kindergarten or 12th grade will not attend school if he or she doesn't document immunization forms on file with the district.

"If a student doesn't have up-to-date immunization forms on file, that student's parents will be notified and in some cases students will be sent home," said district spokesman Chris Petley. "All third and seventh-grade students are required to have their forms on file, unless they meet a medical exemption."

One of the primary concerns parents have with vaccinations is autism, reports the CDC. Throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s, there were concerns about a rise in the number of children with autism spectrum disorders and thimerosal, a preservative found in most vaccines that was removed by 2001.

"Evidence from several studies examining trends in vaccine use and changes in autism frequency does not support such an association between thimerosal and autism," reports the CDC on its website.

Vaccinations work by

2014-2015 SCHOOL ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Before attending school in Florida (kindergarten through 12th grade), each child must provide a Form DH 680, Florida Certification of Immunization, documenting the following vaccinations:

Public/Non-Public Schools Kindergarten through 12th Grade:

- » Four or five doses of diphtheria- tetanus-pertussis (DTaP) vaccine
- » Three, four or five doses of polio vaccine*
- » Two doses of measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine

» Two or three doses of hepatitis B (Hep B) vaccine

» Two doses of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine** for kindergarten through grade 6

» One dose of varicella vaccine** for grades 7 through 12

*If the fourth dose of polio vaccine is administered prior to the fourth birthday, a fifth dose of polio vaccine is required for kindergarten.

**Varicella vaccine is not required if varicella disease is documented by the healthcare provider.

promoting "herd immunity," Davis said. If one child is immune to a disease, then someone else who comes into contact with that child won't be able to catch it. The children without vaccinations are automatically at risk to not only catch an illness, but to spread it to others, she said.

"Immunizations work by protecting me," she

said. "If I'm protected it protects my other counterparts. If more children get immunized it protects a larger proportion."

There are a few - extremely rare - circumstances when a child should not get immunized, Davis said.

"If a child has certain cancers, for instance, or other diseases that would cause them to be immuno-

compromised, there may be some immunizations you don't want to give them," she said. "But that's a case-by-case thing you're going to want to review with your doctor."

As school kicks into full gear, Davis said she'll continue recommending immunizations to all parents.

"They're absolutely safe," she said. "I 100 percent recommend them."