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Grand Traverse County Health Department recognizes National Immunization Awareness Month

August is [National Immunization Awareness Month](#) (NIAM). This annual observance highlights the efforts of health professionals to protect patients of all ages against vaccine-preventable diseases through on-time vaccination.

In response to reports of laboratory confirmed cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in all fifty states, the president of the United States declared a national emergency to the pandemic on March 13, 2020. At that time, individual states began issuing stay-at-home orders throughout the country. Disruptions related to individuals and families sheltering in their homes were anticipated in the healthcare system's ability to continue to provide preventative and non-emergency care, including routine vaccinations.

Grand Traverse County was not exempt from the disruptive trends of declining vaccination rates as anticipated. Following a rapid decline in March and April of this year, the number of vaccine doses administered began to increase through the end of June. However, Grand Traverse County is still lagging behind in vaccine doses given in 2018 and 2019. In May, 2020, doses administered were down 44% and June, 2020, doses were down just over 10%.

Parental concerns about potentially exposing their children to COVID-19 during well-child visits might contribute to the declines observed. However, the vital need to protect all children against serious vaccine-preventable diseases, even as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, is critical. As social distancing requirements are relaxed, children who are not protected by vaccines will be more vulnerable to other preventable diseases.

As public health awaits the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccine and prepares for the 2020-2021 influenza season, the Grand Traverse County Health Department would like to remind everyone that it is critical to maintain routine vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic to protect both individuals and communities. Routine vaccination prevents illnesses that lead to additional medical visits, hospitalizations, and further strain on the healthcare system.

"Vaccination has become a part of "normal" life for many of us. But it is worth remembering how many serious illnesses are no longer a threat to our children thanks to this simple procedure. There is no better time to remind the public of the importance of vaccination than during a global pandemic," said Dr. Michael Collins, Medical Officer, Grand Traverse County Health Department.

The Grand Traverse County Health Department is open for immunization services Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., by appointment only. Clients will be screened over the phone and a temperature will be taken prior to being allowed into the building. Masks are required for entry into the building, unless not physically able due to health or age restrictions. Access to the building is limited to those receiving vaccinations or adults accompanying a minor. All insurances are accepted.

Medicaid and uninsured are welcome. You will not be turned away for inability to pay. To schedule an appointment, call 995-6131. For more information, visit [our website](#).

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