**Child Vaccinations: It’s Worth a Shot.**

August. The month you can see wheels on the school buses rolling again and smell the tip of a freshly sharpened pencil. This August, as more children return to school, we encourage you not to forget vaccinations.

August is National Immunization Awareness Month, which highlights the importance of vaccination for people of all ages.

The pandemic caused a steep decline in child immunizations. Numbers plummeted in 2020 after COVID-19 was declared a national emergency. Data showed there were about 2.5 million fewer doses of vaccines ordered in a single month, including 250,000 fewer doses of measles-containing vaccines, compared to the year prior.

Central Florida Health Care Pediatrician Dr. Heather Wardy says as more children return to school after a year of distance learning, she hopes parents will protect their children from the diseases that vaccines have prevented for years.

Did you know there are 16 different diseases that we protect against with vaccines? Together, we must ensure that our current fight against COVID-19 will not come at the expense of these 16 others. Now, we need to stress the need for children and adolescents to get their routine vaccines and well-visits while emphasizing the extensive measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The last thing anyone wants to see is a new outbreak of Measles, Whooping Cough, or Mumps.

Dr. Wardy encourages all patients to get their annual flu vaccine to minimize the number of co-infections and reduce the burden of severe disease and respiratory illnesses in our communities. She says the pandemic taught us many lessons. One of the most valuable of these may be a renewed appreciation of the gift we have to prevent illness when we can – all thanks to vaccines and the healthcare workers who give them.

You have the power to protect against serious diseases. Be sure to talk with your provider about all the immunizations needed at different stages of life. As Ben Franklin once said, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”