

a healthy conversation

Have a healthy start to the school year

The importance of back-to-school physicals

From Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield

It's that time of year again. In a few short weeks, students will return to the classroom, and back-to-school preparations are in full swing. Ready-ing your child for a successful school year involves more than simply purchasing the trendiest clothes and supplies.

One of the first steps in ensuring students have a safe and healthy start to the year is taking them to get a back-to-school physical examination. These exams, also known as well-checks, are especially important because they are often the only time a child visits the doctor each year. Physical exams not only detect potential health problems before they arise, but they can also provide an assurance of good health.

Back-to-school physicals typically consist of:

- **Routine Physical**—During a routine physical, the physi-

cian will record your child's height and weight, blood pressure and pulse. In addition, the physician will perform a comprehensive check of your child's heart and lungs, abdomen, skin, eyes and ears, nose, mouth, teeth and throat to ensure that no abnormalities exist.

- **Medical History Review**—The doctor will review the medical history of your child and any close relatives to detect illnesses or diseases which might run in the family. This portion of the exam will also include listing any medications your child is taking, as well as previous or current illnesses.
- **Preventative Screenings**—Through routine examinations and blood tests, doctors have the opportunity to monitor a child's overall wellness and screen for problems such as high cho-

lesterol, diabetes and lead poisoning.

- **Immunizations**—Children are required to receive certain immunizations before entering public schools. Back-to-school physicals are the perfect time to make sure that your child is up-to-date on all necessary vaccinations.

As the first day of school approaches, finding time for a visit to the doctor may become difficult. Therefore, it's important to schedule your child's physical exam as soon as possible. Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield makes it easy to locate a physician in your area with its online "Find a Doctor" search tool. Searches can be filtered based upon a doctor's location, specialty and health insurance plans accepted. To access this tool, and to learn more about health insurance, visit www.wellmark.com.

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