Keeping your child safe during COVID-19

It is an uncertain and challenging time. The COVID-19 pandemic has truly upended how we normally live our lives. It is also a stressful and anxious time as we try to protect ourselves, our family, and our community from illness.

It is important to review these ways to protect ourselves and our loved ones during COVID-19. This includes focusing on the essentials during the current shelter-in-place order, such as washing our hands frequently and for at least 20 seconds, getting plenty of rest, going for walks (while avoiding others), and keeping in touch with family and friends through phone or video calls. **For parents with babies or toddlers, there is another essential to remember: continuing to have your baby or toddler get check-ups with the doctor.**

**Bringing your baby or toddler to the doctor’s office for check-ups is important even during a shelter-in-place order.** It is important so that your child stays up-to-date on vaccinations during COVID-19. Between birth and 18 months of age, babies receive vaccines to protect them from 10 serious diseases. Some vaccines need multiple doses to build up your child’s immunity. Even with shelter-in-place, the benefits of vaccinating babies and toddlers through two years of age far outweigh any risks of COVID-19. In addition to providing vaccines, your doctor will weigh and measure your baby or toddler as well as assess your baby or toddler's development. This helps to ensure that your child is growing and developing well and that any issues are caught early.

**What if my child needs vaccines and they are over 2 years old?** Children who have already received their vaccines through two years of age are protected against the most dangerous diseases. Clinics are planning to catch older children up on vaccines later this year, when significant social distancing has ended. If your child has received all of their shots for the first two years, you may be asked to wait to come in for vaccines until later this year and to instead schedule a phone or video visit with your child's doctor.

**Will a visit to the doctor's office increase the chance that my child is exposed to COVID-19?** Doctors’ offices have made many changes since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the risk to children is low and families feel safe. Many offices are only offering well child appointments. Other offices are offering well child appointments in the morning and sick child appointments during the afternoons, with a deep clean overnight. You should talk to your doctor’s office about what measures they are taking to keep you and your child safe. If you need to use the bus or another form of public transportation to get to your child's doctor's office, mention this to your doctor. If you are asked to go to the laboratory or pharmacy, talk to your doctor about how to minimize exposure of your infant to others by staying in the clinic room until the service is ready for your child.

**Don't delay having your baby or toddler see their doctor. This is another essential way to keep them healthy during COVID-19. Thank you for keeping your child safe.**