

HealthyLiving

CONNECTING WITH OUR PATIENTS AND OUR COMMUNITY

Prepare for School with a Visit to the Pediatrician

While summer recess is in full session, it will be no time at all before lunch boxes come out of storage and school supply lists start circulating. Parents will have another important item to check off: making sure their child's vaccinations are up to date. Classrooms, cafeterias, and school buses are common places where illnesses can spread quickly. Vaccines help protect students from serious diseases like measles, whooping cough, and the flu, some of which have been on the rise in New Jersey.



"Vaccines are one of the safest and most effective ways to keep children healthy," said Michael Lucas, MD, pediatrician and medical director of the Pediatric Faculty Group at the Pediatric Health Center at Saint Peter's Family Health Center. "We're seeing a national increase in vaccine-preventable illnesses like measles and whooping cough. That's why it's critical for children to receive their shots on time, especially before school starts."

Vaccines to Protect Your Children

In New Jersey, children must have several vaccines before they can attend school. These vaccines protect against diseases that can spread easily in group settings.

- **DTaP** protects against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (whooping cough) in children under 7 years of age. These are serious bacterial infections that can cause breathing problems, muscle spasms, and severe coughing fits.
- The **hepatitis B** vaccine protects against a liver infection spread through blood or body fluids.
- The **MMR** vaccine protects against measles, mumps, and rubella. Measles is highly contagious and can lead to pneumonia and brain swelling. Mumps can cause swelling in the face and jaw. Rubella causes rash and enlarged lymph nodes.
- **Polio** can cause paralysis. Although it's rare in the United States, cases have been found in other countries and could return without herd immunity.
- The **varicella** vaccine protects against chickenpox, which causes an itchy rash and fever and can lead to skin infections or pneumonia.
- **Tdap** and **meningococcal** vaccines are required for students entering sixth grade. They protect against tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis, and bacterial meningitis.
- The **HPV** (Human Papillomavirus) vaccine is recommended at age 11 or 12 to protect against cancers caused by HPV infection. Both boys and girls should get the HPV vaccine.
- The **flu** vaccine is required for children in preschool and recommended every year for children 6 months and older. Young children are more likely to develop serious complications from the flu, including pneumonia and dehydration.



Prepare for School with a Visit to the Pediatrician *(continued)*

In recent years, health officials have reported more cases of measles, pertussis, and RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) across the country. These diseases can be especially dangerous for babies, young children, and people with weakened immune systems.

“Even one case of measles can lead to an outbreak in a school or community if herd immunity is not present,” said Sabah Kalyoussef, DO, pediatric infectious diseases specialist at The Children’s Hospital at Saint Peter’s University Hospital. “Vaccination protects



not only your child, but others who may be more vulnerable, such as infants too young to be vaccinated, children with weakened immune systems, or elderly caregivers at home. When more people are vaccinated, it becomes much harder for diseases to spread. That kind of community protection is how we keep schools safe and avoid preventable illness.”

What to Expect During the School Year

As children return to school, families should expect to see common seasonal illnesses like the flu, RSV, and strep throat. Some may be mild, but others can lead to missed school days or more serious health issues.

Saint Peter’s pediatricians encourage parents to schedule a wellness visit before the start of the school year. These visits are a chance to review vaccine records, discuss health concerns, and ask questions about any changes in guidelines.

“Annual check-ups are an important time to talk about vaccines, growth, nutrition, and emotional health,” said Dr. Lucas. “These visits help us catch any concerns early, track developmental milestones, and ensure children are protected from preventable diseases. It’s also a chance for families to ask questions, share observations, and build a trusting relationship with their child’s doctor. Preventive care like this plays a key role in keeping kids healthy and ready to succeed in school and everyday life.”

To make an appointment for pediatric vaccinations, visit saintpetershcs.com/PediatricHealthCenter.

To make an appointment with the Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, call 732.339.7841.

Saint Peter’s Awarded for Vaccination Efforts

The Pediatric Health Center at Saint Peter’s Family Health Center is receiving the “Outstanding VFC Provider Award Region 4” (Middlesex, Monmouth and Ocean counties) from the New Jersey Department of Health Vaccine for Children (NJ VFC) program for its outstanding vaccination efforts and exemplary participation within the NJ VFC program for 2024.

The VFC program provides vaccines at no cost to eligible children, helping to ensure that all children receive their Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-recommended vaccinations on schedule. These vaccines protect children from diseases such as pertussis, diphtheria, varicella, measles, mumps, rubella, RSV, and meningitis. In 2024, Saint Peter’s administered 30,874 doses of VFC vaccines to children in the community.

“We’re proud to be recognized for our efforts in keeping the community safe,” said Luis Ramos, office manager, Pediatric Health Center at Saint Peter’s Family Health Center. “We want to make sure each child is healthy and prepared for the year ahead, so we make an effort to educate parents and schedule appointments that accommodate their busy schedules.”



Saint Peter's ICU and PICU Nurses Earn Beacon Award for Exceptional Patient Care



The Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Saint Peter's University Hospital and the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) at The Children's Hospital at Saint Peter's University Hospital have earned the Silver Beacon Award for Excellence by the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN). This is the seventh Beacon Award for the ICU and the second for the PICU.

The Beacon Award for Excellence, a significant milestone on the path to exceptional patient care and healthy work environments, recognizes unit caregivers who successfully improve unit outcomes and align practices with AACN's six Healthy Work Environment Standards: skilled communication, true collaboration, effective decision making, appropriate staffing, meaningful recognition, and authentic leadership. Units that earn this annual award meet specific criteria established by AACN that represent the characteristics and components of the unit environment that nurses can influence to achieve nursing excellence.

Many units provide exceptional patient care; however, units recognized with the Beacon Award distinguish themselves by excelling in many areas demonstrated in their application. All awardees demonstrate dynamic and outstanding performance in the areas of patient outcomes through safe medication practices and reduced unit-acquired infections, nursing workforce through competency and mentorship, and work environment through nurse well-being and retention, among other areas.

"This dual recognition of our ICU and PICU with the Silver Beacon Award highlights the extraordinary dedication, skill, and compassion of our critical care nursing teams. It's a proud moment that reflects their commitment to excellence in delivering high-quality patient care in the most complex environments," said Linda Carroll, MSN, RN, MEDSURG-BC, vice president of Patient Care Services and chief nursing officer at Saint Peter's Healthcare System.

AACN President Jennifer Adamski, DNP, APRN, ACNP-BC, CCRN, FCCM, applauds the commitment of the caregivers at Saint Peter's ICU and PICU for working together to



Saint Peter's PICU (top) and ICU (bottom) nurses were recognized for providing exceptional patient care.



meet and exceed the high standards set forth by the Beacon Award for Excellence to achieve a silver-level designation. These dedicated healthcare professionals join other members of our exceptional community of nurses, who set the standard for optimal patient care.

"The Beacon Award for Excellence recognizes caregivers in outstanding units whose consistent and systematic approach to evidence-based care optimizes patient outcomes. Units that receive this national recognition serve as role models to others on their journey to excellent patient and family care," said Adamski.

To learn more about Saint Peter's recognitions, visit saintpetershcs.com/awards.

Cancer Support

Cancer Care
800.813.HOPE (4673)
supportgroup@cancercare.org

Cancer Hope Network
877.467.3638

Crossroads4Hope
908.658.5400

Sister 2 Sister
For Breast Cancer Survivors
732.246.8300

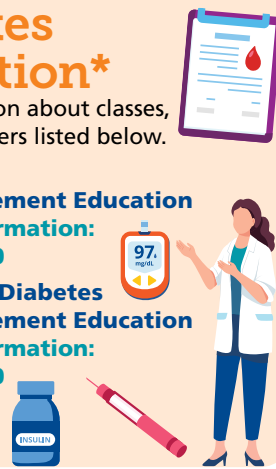


Diabetes Education*

For information about classes, call the numbers listed below.

Diabetes Self-Management Education
Call for information:
732.339.7630

Gestational Diabetes Self-Management Education
Call for information:
732.339.7630



Know the Warning Signs of Stroke

B
BALANCE



E
EYES



F
FACE



A
ARMS



S
SPEECH



T
TERRIBLE HEADACHE



Time is brain!

Call 911 immediately if someone is displaying stroke symptoms.

Parent Education

Some parenting classes are being held online. Once registered for a class, access information will be provided to you.

Register at saintpetershcs.com/ParentEducation. For information about the following classes, please call Parent Education at 732.745.8579.

Baby Care	Hypnobirthing
Birth Center Class (for moms under midwifery care)	New Daddy Class
Breastfeeding Class	Prenatal Yoga/Exercise Class
Grandparents Class	Prepared Childbirth/Lamaze Classes
	Sibling Class

Support Groups

Bariatric Nutrition Support

2nd Thursday of each month
Next meeting:
July 10 • 6 – 7 pm
Call 732.339.7450 for Zoom meeting information

Bereavement

Call Pastoral Care for information:
732.745.8565

Craniofacial Teen Girls

Call for information:
732.745.8600, x8113

MyGoal Autism Family

2nd Sunday of each month
Next meeting:
July 13 • 3 pm
Call 877.886.9462 or email info@mygoalautism.org for virtual meeting information

SHARE

3rd Thursday of each month
Next meeting:
July 17 • 7 – 9 pm
Call 732.745.8522 or email imariano@saintpetersuh.com for Zoom link

Spouse/Partner Caregiver Support

Call for information:
732.745.8600, x8653

Parent Support

Registration is required. Visit saintpetershcs.com/ParentEducation or call 732.745.8579.

Breastfeeding Support Group

1st Tuesday of each month
Next meeting: July 1 • 1 pm

New Moms Support Group "Life Will Never Be The Same"

1st Tuesday of each month
Next meeting: July 1 • 12 pm

Saint Peter's Virtual Urgent Care

Monday through Friday
5 to 10 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.



saintpetershcs.com/virtualurgentcare

Need a doctor? To find a Saint Peter's physician, visit saintpetershcs.com/findaphysician.

Online scheduling is also available with select Saint Peter's Healthcare System physicians via Zocdoc at BookMySPDoc.com

This calendar is for information only. Do not rely on it to make healthcare decisions on your own; instead, talk with your healthcare provider for advice and treatment. Do not ignore medical advice or delay seeking it because of something you read here. We do not suggest or endorse that you have any tests, use products, or use other information in this document without advice from your healthcare provider.



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