

Parents Key to the Health of Children

Establishing a Relationship with a Pediatrician is First Step

Thousands of Ohio's children do not receive the preventative care they need to be healthy now and into adulthood. Only one in three children in the United States is physically active every day, and one in five school-aged children (ages 6-19) is obese, according to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

Ohio's children face an uphill battle when it comes to their health. According to the Health Policy Institute of Ohio:

- [Ohio ranks 46 out of 50 states on health value](#). This means that Ohioans are living less healthy lives and spend more on health care than people in most other states.
- [Ohio's 2015 infant mortality rate](#) was 7.2 per 1,000, which is 24 percent higher than the national rate and up from 6.8 percent the year before.
- [Ohio's suicide rate for children ages 10-14](#) has now surpassed the death rate from traffic accidents among this age group. The suicide rate is 53% versus 47% for traffic accidents.
- [Infant drug withdrawal](#) has spiked in rural counties — the rate has climbed from about 1 in 1,000 births in 2004 to almost 8 per 1,000 births in 2013.
- [State immunization requirements](#) are not being met — on average, 8.5 percent of new students in Ohio didn't have complete vaccinations by mid-October of 2015.
- [Ohio ranks sixth in the nation](#) for the highest rate of food insecurity (households facing uncertainty or limited ability to provide food) and ranks highest in the region. Food insecurity impacts educational achievement, health outcomes and productivity.

These and other issues indicate an alarming downward trend in the overall health of Ohio's children and points to the need for parents to take an active role in their child's health.

According to Dr. Brad Lucas, Medical Director for Buckeye Health Plan, taking an active role doesn't have to be overwhelming. Developing a strong relationship with your child's pediatrician is a great start. Buckeye encourages parents to schedule well-child visits and talk to their pediatrician about their child's health on a regular basis.

"Pediatricians are in the best position to assess and guide a child's health plan," said Dr. Lucas. "They are not just looking at a child's physical symptoms but looking at all aspects that could have an impact on a child's health."

Healthy Kids Start with Well-Child Visits

Regularly scheduled well-child visits allow your child to become familiar and comfortable with health care professionals. They also allow your pediatrician to get to know and understand your

child, which helps them provide the best care and preventative recommendations. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, there are many benefits of well-child visits:

- **Prevention:** Well-child visits include scheduled immunizations, which can protect infants from 14 serious childhood diseases such as whooping cough, measles, mumps, polio, tetanus and chickenpox.
- **Tracking growth and development:** Make the most of your child's check-up. Always bring a list of concerns or topics to discuss with the pediatrician. This list can cover physical, mental, language and social skills and whether your child is reaching developmental milestones on schedule.
- **Team approach:** Regular visits create a trusting relationship among the pediatrician, parent and child, which helps develop the best physical, mental and social health of the child.