

Children's experts: Don't miss pediatrician visits during pandemic

UMMC
Missing pediatric well visits and vaccinations due to the COVID-19 pandemic can harm your child's health, Children's of Mississippi experts say.

"We want to see our patients for their health maintenance visits and all other health care needs," said Dr. Anza Stanley, assistant professor of pediatrics and a general pediatrician at the Children's of Mississippi clinic at 421 S. Stadium Drive near the University of Mississippi Medical Center campus in Jackson.

Children's of Mississippi is UMMC's pediatric arm, including the state's only

children's hospital as well as pediatric specialty and subspecialty clinics around the state.

Chisa Lanier of Ridge-land brought year-old twins Zavi and Zuri Jackson to see Stanley for a check-up. "COVID-19 is a concern, but I know that the clinic is taking the steps to be safe. I want to make sure they're healthy."

Stanley said check-ups such as Zavi's and Zuri's are important.

"These visits are when a child's growth and development are monitored," Stanley said. "Being up-to-date in vaccinations is vital, and immunizations are done at these visits. A child going to

well visits will most likely have fewer illnesses, and any health issues that child has will not go undiagnosed."

Children who have chronic health issues need those follow-up visits, since conditions such as asthma and diabetes can be adversely affected by COVID-19.

For teenagers, check-ups can be a time to screen for anxiety and depression. Physicians can also ask families about issues including food and family activities.

"We want to make sure our patients and their families are as healthy as they can be," Stanley said.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, which represents

more than 67,000 pediatricians across the country, stresses the importance of routine clinic visits.

"It's really critical for parents to remember that their pediatricians and pediatric sub-specialists are out there and available to take care of kids," said AAP President Dr. Sally Goza, a practicing pediatrician in Fayetteville, Georgia, in an interview on

"Good Morning America." "We are available to see patients, and yet we know it's a scary time for parents."

Children's of Mississippi is taking special care to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus. All health care team members wear face masks and practice hand hygiene and other infection prevention measures.

Waiting areas have been rearranged for social distancing and are frequently cleaned and sanitized.

When patients arrive at Children's of Mississippi clinics, their families are

questioned on fever and any possible exposure to COVID-19. Patients 2 years and older and their families are required to wear face masks. Masks will be provided to those without them.

"We are taking the steps to make each visit to our clinic safe for everyone," Stanley said.

To learn more about Children's of Mississippi, visit the Children's of Mississippi webpage.

To make an appointment at any Children's of Mississippi clinic, call (888) 815-2005.



Dr. Anza Stanley listens to Zavi Jackson's heartbeat while his twin sister, Zuri, watches.

Nearly half of state's population now under mask mandate

Mississippi Today
More than 1.4 million Mississippians are now under a mandate – imposed by Gov. Tate Reeves – to wear a mask in public and while shopping.

On Monday, the first-term Republican governor added 10 counties to the original 13 he had placed under a mandate on July 10 to wear a mask in public crowds in an effort to try to combat the spread of COVID-19.

The new executive order will remain in effect until Aug. 3.

State Health Officer Thomas Dobbs said the state's health care system is at the point of being overwhelmed.

"If we don't see a decrease in transmissions immediately, it is pretty likely the health care system will be thoroughly overwhelmed,"



Masks are worn as hand sanitizer is distributed at Corner Market on Fortification Street in Jackson, Miss., Wednesday, April 8, 2020. (Photo Submitted)

Dobbs said Monday during the news conference he and Reeves had to provide an update on COVID-19. He said hospitals already are converting emergency rooms into intensive care unit beds.

Dobbs said statewide there are 293 cases of coronavirus being treated in intensive care units – representing 40 percent of all patients in intensive care. He said nine hospitals – mostly the state's larger ones – have no intensive care beds and there is one ICU bed in the Jackson metro area.

The new counties covered by the mask mandate are Bolivar, Covington, Forrest, Humphreys, Panola, Sharkey, Simpson, Tallahatchie, Tate and Walthall. The original 13 counties still under the mask mandate are Claiborne, DeSoto, Grenada, Harrison, Hinds, Jackson, Jefferson, Madison, Quitman, Rankin, Sunflower, Washington and Wayne counties.

ment from the White House coronavirus task force. The report also recommends increasing testing and contact tracing.

The Mississippi State Medical Association, a physician group, has also called for a statewide mask mandate. Reeves has rejected a statewide mandate, saying it is more effective and will encourage community participation to target the state's hot spots, though he and Dobbs stress that people statewide should wear masks and practice physical distancing of remaining six feet apart when possible.

The criteria for counties chosen for the mandate include having seen 200 new cases within the last 14 days or having had an average of 500 cases per 100,000 residents over that time.

Under the executive order, groups of more than 10 indoors and more than 20 outdoors are banned.

"COVID-19 is spreading and killing in our state. It is not a hypothetical. It is happening," Reeves said.

On Monday, the Mississippi Department of Health reported a record of 1,251 new cases, three deaths, 943 hospitalizations for COVID-19. The previous single day record of 1,230 new cases was set last week. The number of hospitalizations also was a record.

At the news conference, it was reported about 30 members of the Legislature have contracted the coronavirus with multiple members hospitalized – some in serious condition.

While covering only 23 of the state's 82 counties, the mask mandate encompasses many of the state's most populous counties, such as Hinds, Rankin, DeSoto, and Harrison. The state has a total population of just under three million residents, according to the latest census data.

Mississippi, which has seen a surge in both positive tests and coronavirus hospitalizations, is in a red zone where a statewide mask mandate and the closing or bars and gyms in hotspots are recommended, according to an internal docu-

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