



FAMILY

Health department offers options for low-cost health care

By Betsy C. McElfresh
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The Chesterfield Health Department offers a breadth of services for women and children. Some services are free, some have a flat fee and others use a sliding scale based on household income and number of family members. It also accepts Medicaid, FAMIS and Anthem for prenatal care and family planning services.

In order to qualify for reduced cost or free services, people need to bring identification and proof of residency and income. Staff can assist people in applying for eligible payment options, such as Medicaid or FAMIS.

The health department only offers preventative health care, not acute sick care or ongoing medical care. People are encouraged to use private care whenever possible.

"If children have a payment source [insurance], we want them to have a medical home rather than use the health department," explains Paige Cecil, nursing supervisor for the health department's women's health services. "We don't compete with the private sector for medical services."

For children

Immunizations are available for children from birth to age 18. Those that are required by law for school are free. Children can receive other shots that are not required for school, such as hepatitis A, meningococcal and human papillomavirus (HPV), for a fee. If they qualify for the Vaccines for Children program, they will receive all vaccines for free.

Almost all childhood immunizations and some adult vaccines are available at no cost thanks to a federally funded program, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). "As soon as the supply is gone, the program will end," states Kathryn Ray, nursing supervisor for child health services.

Administration fees apply for these vaccines, but the health department can bill most insurance companies for them.

Walk-in childhood immunization clinics are held each Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9-11 a.m. and 1-4 p.m. and Thursday evenings from 4-6 p.m.

Children from birth to 5 years old can receive regular well-child checkups based on the national recommended guidelines. These visits are by appointment only, and fees are based on income.

School entrance physicals are also available by appointment and for a fee. Children in grades K-5 who are new to Chesterfield County Public Schools will need a school physical. Physicals include vital signs, hearing, vision, immunizations, lead screening, lab tests and screening for developmental delays. The department makes referrals to school resources for conditions such as delayed speech or impaired hearing.

Pediatric dental services are offered for ages 4 to 18, including routine cleanings, fillings, sealants, extractions and emergency care. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Child safety seats are free for eligible residents. People are required to complete a course before receiving the safety seat.

The Women's, Infants and Children's program (commonly known as WIC) is housed at the health department. Low-income women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or postpartum and children up to 5 years old are eligible. They receive free vouchers for supplemental food and nutritional counseling. Vouchers can



Lisa Billings/Chesterfield Observer

Jon Donnelly, program coordinator of the Medical Reserve Corps, gets a flu shot at the health department.

be redeemed for certain foods that are high in protein, calcium, iron or vitamins A and C.

For women

Women's health services include pregnancy testing, prenatal care, gynecological exams, testing for sexually transmitted diseases, birth control and health education and counseling. These services are by appointment only, and fees are based on income or can be billed to Medicaid.

Prenatal care follows the same schedule as private practitioners – once a month until seven months, then twice a month and every week after 30 weeks – and includes necessary lab work. The health department does not offer ultrasounds on-site. It collaborates with the VCU School of Medicine. Obstetrics and gynecology residents make rounds twice a week to see prenatal patients.

Most patients that seek the health department's services are uninsured or underinsured, Cecil explains. They do not turn people away based on their income levels. "We get quite a variety of clients, especially because of the economy," Ray adds.

"We see many people who work and make a decent living but don't have insurance to cover prescriptions," describes Cecil. For example, people can buy birth control pills for as little as 50 cents a month or up to \$8 a month, depending on the rate at which they are purchased.

The department offers birth control pills, Depo-Provera shots, IUDs, vaginal rings and condoms. "We have something that will fit most people's needs; it might not be the brand that you get at your doctor," notes Cecil, but they will offer a similar product based on its formulation.

On Fridays at 8 a.m., the department offers 15 walk-in visits and 15 scheduled appointments for testing and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases free of charge. HIV testing and counseling are held Monday and Friday from 9-11 a.m. and Tuesday through Friday from 1-4 p.m.

Pregnancy testing and counseling are available Monday through Friday, 8:30-11 a.m. and 1-4 p.m. Services are free to Medicaid clients and teens ages 18 years and younger or

available throughout the week. Foreign travel vaccines are given by appointment. Call 748-1975 for information on fees and hours.

The health department will have flu vaccine clinics this fall. Call 768-7499 for a schedule and costs.

The health department office is closed the first Thursday morning of each month, and no appointments or walk-in clinics are available that day.

Important numbers

For more information on the Chesterfield Health Department's services*, visit www.vdh.state.va.us/LHD/chesterfield/index.htm or call:

Child health services	751-4908
Child immunizations	768-7454
Child safety seats	717-6142
Child dental services	748-1752
WIC	748-1748
Women's health	751-4350
Flu vaccine information	768-7499
Adult and foreign travel immunizations	748-1975

*Spanish-speaking interpreters are available for certain services.

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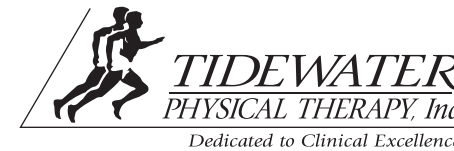


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