

Immunizations Important for Infant Health

Getting babies all the recommended vaccinations they need by age two is one of the most important things parents can do to help protect their children's health. By protecting them, babies develop immunity from 14 serious childhood diseases, like whooping cough (pertussis) and measles.

Healthcare professionals remain parents' most trusted source of information about vaccines for their children. They play a crucial role in supporting parents in understanding and choosing vaccinations. Because of the success of vaccines in preventing disease, parents may not have heard of some of the serious diseases they prevent. These diseases can be especially serious for infants and young children.

For example, measles had been eliminated in the United States since 2000, but within the past couple years there have been more measles cases diagnosed than we had previously seen. In 2014, there were 23 outbreaks that resulted in a total of 667 cases. So far this year, from January 1, through April 11, 2019, there have been 555 cases with most of the cases being diagnosed in New York City and Rockland County, NY. This is the second greatest number of cases reported since measles was eliminated in 2000 and we are only in April.

Measles spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Measles can be serious. Some people think of measles as just a little rash and fever that clears up in a few days, but measles can cause serious health complications, especially in children younger than 5 years of age.

- About 1 in 4 people in the U.S. who get measles will be hospitalized
- 1 out of every 1,000 people with measles will develop brain swelling, which could lead to brain damage
- 1 or 2 out of 1,000 people with measles will die, even with the best care

Over the last few decades we have also seen an increase in whooping cough cases. More than 15,000 cases of whooping cough were reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention during 2016. Whooping cough can be deadly, especially for young babies who are too young to be protected by their own vaccination. Since 2010, there have been between 10,000 and 50,000 cases each year in the United States and up to 20 babies dying.

Did you know that protecting babies from serious illnesses starts before they are born? It is important to know that all pregnant women are recommended to receive the whooping cough vaccine, or Tdap during each pregnancy. The recommended time to get the shot is the 27th through the 36th week of pregnancy, preferably during the earlier part of this time period. This will help protect babies from whooping cough until they can receive their first whooping cough vaccine at 2 months. It is also essential that any loved one or caregiver of the young baby be up to date with their immunizations including a Tdap shot.

Vaccines are among the most successful and cost-effective public health tools available for preventing disease and death. They not only help protect vaccinated individuals, but also help protect entire communities by preventing and reducing the spread of infectious diseases. Among children born during 1994-2018, vaccination will prevent an estimated 419 million illnesses, 26.8

million hospitalizations, and 936,000 deaths over the course of their lifetimes; at a net savings of \$406 billion in direct costs and \$1.88 trillion in total societal costs.

2019 also marks the 25th anniversary of the Vaccines For Children (VFC) program. VFC is a federally funded program that provides vaccines at no cost to children who might not otherwise be vaccinated because of inability to pay. The VFC program helps children get their vaccines according to the recommended immunization schedule. It has helped increase childhood immunization coverage levels, making a significant contribution to the elimination of disparities in vaccination coverage among young children.

The Cayuga County Health Department participates in the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program and has a variety of vaccines in stock. We also participate in the Vaccines for Adults (VFA) program which is similar to the VFC program in which it provides vaccines to those adults who are uninsured or may not be able to afford them.

Vaccination is a shared responsibility between families, healthcare professionals, and public health officials in order to help protect the entire community. Please call the Cayuga County Health Department if you have questions, we are here to help. We can be reached at 315-253-1560 to answer questions or schedule you in to one of our weekly immunization clinics.

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