



NEWS RELEASE

Mary Brumage
Marketing and Media Specialist
(970) 522-3741 x1257
maryb@nchd.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

It's a Great Time to Delete Disease

Sterling, Colo. – August 21, 2020: Since the beginning of the 19th century, deleting disease has been the goal for public health around the world and now is no exception. In fact, COVID-19 has added even more importance to getting vaccinations to avoid vaccine-preventable diseases and reducing the stress on our healthcare system during the upcoming cold and flu season. You may be wondering is it safe to get immunized right now? Policies are in place at hospitals, doctor offices and clinics to ensure the safety of all visitors including those needing immunizations. More than any other, 2020 is the year, that everyone needs to be up to date on their immunizations and since August is National Immunization month, it's a good time to talk about what is needed and why.

We want to do the best for our children, including keeping them healthy. The best way to start is by getting them vaccinated for 14 diseases by age 2 because children in the U.S. still get vaccine-preventable diseases. In fact, we have seen resurgences of measles and whooping cough (pertussis) over the past few years. In most cases, infants contract whooping cough through household members, including parents and siblings.

Encouraging others to assure they are up-to-date on vaccinations at least 2 weeks before meeting baby is the best way to keep your newborn safe. Measles is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus that can be serious for young children.

In 2019, we saw the greatest number of measles cases in the U.S. since 1992, with 1,282 individual cases of measles confirmed in 31 states. Of these cases, 128 were hospitalized and 61 reported having complications, including pneumonia and encephalitis (swelling of the brain). Each of these sad and painful situations may have been avoided with the administering of a vaccine.

Since immunization schedules are designed to provide immunity early in life, before children are likely to be exposed to serious, potentially life-threatening diseases, childhood vaccinations are just as important as the infant series. Kids ages 4 to 6 years old are due for boosters of four vaccines: DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis, also called whooping cough), chickenpox, MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella), and polio. In the past, Colorado had one of the lowest rates for MMR vaccination in the nation and last week Colorado exceeded its one-year goal of having 90% of kindergartners vaccinated for measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR). With school just around the corner, we want to continue that trend and encourage parents to maintain these important prevention steps to protect their children against potentially deadly diseases. If you are interested in reviewing your school's rate of immunizations go to covaxrates.org.

Older children, like pre-teens and teens, also need booster vaccines of DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis) and MenCV4 (meningococcal virus) and along with the HPV (Human papillomavirus) vaccine. All three boost immunity into adulthood from potentially deadly viruses. The HPV vaccine protects against contracting Human papillomavirus that causes cancers in teens and adults. About 14 million people, including teens, become infected with HPV each year. All children ages 10 to 12 years should get two shots of HPV vaccine six to twelve months apart. Research shows that receiving vaccinations for HPV in early preteens (around 10 years of age), long before ever being exposed to the virus, improves immunity. Of those who are not immunized,

80% will get an HPV infection in their lifetime. These infections can go away on their own, but others can cause cancer. A simple vaccination as a pre-teen is so much better than trying to treat cancer as an adult.

Maturing does not mean we are off the hook for being immunized and we should keep records and be aware of what is needed and when. Like children, adult vaccinations play a significant part in preventing illnesses and hospitalizations. Tetanus and Diphtheria shots need to be updated every 10 years. If you are pregnant, be sure to get Tdap to protect yourself and your unborn child. Anyone over 50 will need to vaccinate against Shingles, an incredibly painful rash that generally affects older adults.

If you haven't in the past, 2020 is the year to get a flu shot. Starting at 6 months of age, flu shots are safe and even more important because of COVID-19. You don't want flu and COVID-19 at the same time, and yes you can get both. Flu vaccine alone prevents tens of thousands of hospitalizations each year. For example, during 2017-2018, flu vaccinations prevented an estimated 91,000 flu-related hospitalizations. With the threat of COVID-19 cases rising, you want to prevent any chance of getting sick and taking up hospital beds for an illness that is preventable. High risk populations such as pregnant women, immunocompromised and adults 65 and older should make it a priority to be immunized as soon as the flu vaccine is available. If you haven't already, contact your family doctor or call one of our offices for an appointment. For more information, visit our website <https://www.nchd.org/client-services>.

Make sure you and your loved ones are protected from preventable diseases. This will save the healthcare resources needed to fight COVID-19, a disease that we can't immunize against yet.

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