



## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Vaccines Save Lives And Are Safe**

*National Immunization Awareness Month celebrates the important of vaccines*

**SPRINGFIELD** – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is recognizing August as National Immunization Awareness Month as a reminder that vaccines protect against a number of serious and potentially life-threatening diseases. Vaccines give parents the safe, proven power to protect their children from serious diseases like measles and whooping cough (pertussis).

“Most young parents in the U.S. have never seen the devastating effects of diseases like measles and polio, but those diseases still exist,” said IDPH Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “Children who don’t receive recommended vaccines are at risk of not only getting those diseases, but of having a severe case of those diseases. You can’t predict if your child will become sick with a vaccine-preventable disease, or how severe the illness will be, but you can provide the best protection by following the recommended immunization schedule and getting your child the vaccines they need, when they need them.”

Many vaccine-preventable diseases are still common in other parts of the world. For example, measles is brought into the U.S. by unvaccinated travelers who are infected while in other countries. When measles gets into communities of unvaccinated people in the U.S. (such as people who refuse vaccines for religious, philosophical, or personal reasons), outbreaks are more likely to occur. Illinois experienced a measles outbreak in 2015 in a daycare in which 12 of the 13 cases were infants too young to be vaccinated. Vaccines don’t just protect your child; they help protect the entire community—especially babies who are too young to be vaccinated.

The U.S. has the safest vaccine supply in its history. Vaccines are thoroughly tested before licensing and carefully monitored after they are licensed to ensure they are very safe. The vaccination schedule also has been scientifically shown to be safe. Although children continue to get several vaccines up to their second birthday, these vaccines do not “overload” the immune system. Vaccines contain only a tiny amount of the antigens (the parts of the germs that cause the body’s immune system to respond) that your child encounters every day, even if your child receives several vaccines in one day.

When a child develops a disease like whooping cough, chickenpox, or the flu, they may miss several days of school. It could also mean lost money because a parent or caregiver will need to stay home to provide care and make trips to the doctor.

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The State of Illinois requires vaccinations to protect children from a variety of diseases before they can enter school. For school entrance, students must show proof of diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, haemophilus influenza type b, hepatitis b, and varicella, as well as pneumococcal and now meningococcal (depending on age) vaccinations. For more information about immunizations, including [vaccination schedules](#) for infants, children, teens and adults, visit <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/prevention-wellness/immunization>.

Families who need help paying for childhood vaccines should ask their health care professional about the Vaccines for Children program, which provides vaccines at no cost to eligible children who do not otherwise have access to recommended childhood vaccines. For information, call (312) 746-6050 in Chicago or (217) 785-1455 for the rest of the state.

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