



COUNTY HEALTH MATTERS

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National Infant Immunization Week

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Love Them, Protect Them, Immunize Them

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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 from developing potentially serious diseases, they also help protect entire communities by preventing and reducing the spread of communicable diseases.

We all want our children to know they are loved, and to grow up happy, healthy and safe. To keep them safe, we put them in child safety seats, install childproof door latches, and teach them to look both ways before crossing the street. We dress them warm in winter, wash their hands, and make sure they eat their vegetables to keep them healthy. What we don't often think of vaccinations against childhood diseases.

Today, tens of thousands of children who would have died of infectious diseases before vaccines are alive and healthy. Most of these children would have died before age two. We live in a time when there are few visible reminders of the suffering, injuries, and premature deaths caused by diseases that are now easily preventable. Since we don't see the diseases around us anymore we tend to forget that they are still out there and immunizing our children gets put to the back of our minds.

In the 1950's polio was a national obsession. Polio is a disease caused by a virus that sometimes can cause serious illness, paralysis, and even death. Parents wouldn't let their children swim or attend summer camp for fear of polio. In 1955 a vaccine was developed and as a result wild polio has been eliminated from the Western Hemisphere. However polio still exists in some countries and it only takes one unvaccinated child to cause it to reappear here. This is just one of the many diseases our children need to be vaccinated against.

As a standard, infants should be immunized at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 12 months, and 15-18 months of age. A set of shots is also required for children entering kindergarten. If your child is behind on shots you can work with your healthcare provider to get caught up. No child should have to suffer and possibly die from a vaccine-preventable disease. We have the means to protect all of our nation's children against these terrible diseases.

For more information on vaccine-preventable disease visit the Centers for Disease Control's National Immunization Program website at www.cdc.gov/nip or the Immunization Action Coalition website at www.immunize.org.

The Warren county health department provides all recommended childhood immunizations for any child in the county. For information or to make an appointment call 636-456-7474.