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Public Health Promotes National Infant Immunization Week – April 22-29

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 disease.

In observance of National Infant Immunization Week, the Iroquois County Public Health Department is encouraging parents to talk to their child's healthcare provider to ensure their infant is current on immunizations. "Vaccinating children on time before their second birthday is the best way to protect them against 14 serious and potentially deadly diseases," said Vonda Pruitt, Director of Nursing and Social Services for the Iroquois County Public Health Department. "The recommended vaccine schedule protects babies early in life before they are likely to be exposed to potentially serious diseases and when they are most vulnerable."

Although children get several vaccines up to their second birthday, these vaccines do not overload the immune system. A healthy baby's immune system successfully fights off millions of antigens every day. According to the CDC, the antigens (the parts of germs that cause the body's immune system to respond) in vaccines come from weakened or killed germs so they cannot cause serious illness. Vaccines contain only a tiny amount of the antigens that babies encounter every day, even if they receive several vaccines in one day.

Because of the success of vaccines, parents may not be aware of the serious diseases they prevent, such as measles, mumps and whooping cough. It's easy to think of these as diseases of the past, but the truth is they still exist. One example of this is an increase in measles cases or outbreaks that were reported in 2014. The United States experienced a record number of measles cases, with 667 cases from 27 states reported to the CDC. This is the greatest number of cases since measles elimination was documented in the U.S. in 2000. The majority of people were unvaccinated and got measles in the United States after being exposed to someone who got measles while in another country.

Even when diseases are rare in the U.S., they can be brought into Iroquois County, putting unvaccinated children at risk. "Maintaining high vaccination rates by vaccinating on time, every time, is the key to keeping dangerous diseases away from our communities," said Ms. Pruitt.

Iroquois County Public Health Department offers immunizations for children as well as adults. Please call the health department at 815-432-2483 for more information or to schedule an appointment.