



**Date: April 17, 2018**

**FOR RELEASE THE WEEK OF:  
Immediate Release**

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### **Public Health Promotes National Infant Immunization Week – April 21-28**

Vaccines are among the most successful and cost-effective public health tools available for preventing disease. They not only help protect vaccinated individuals, but also help protect entire communities by preventing and reducing the spread of infectious disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that routine immunization of children born between 1994 and 2016 will prevent an estimated 381 million illnesses, 24.5 million hospitalizations, and 855,000 early deaths over the course of their lifetimes, at a net savings of \$360 billion in direct costs and \$1.65 trillion in total societal costs.

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."

Children are exposed to thousands of germs every day in their environment, through the food they eat, air they breathe and things they put in their mouth. Babies are born with immune systems that can fight most germs, but there are some deadly diseases they can't handle. That's why they need vaccines to strengthen their immune system. Thanks to scientific advances, today's vaccines can protect children from more diseases using fewer antigens. Thirty years ago vaccines used 3,000 antigens to protect against eight diseases by age two. Today vaccines use only 305 antigens to protect against 14 diseases by age two. Vaccines contain only a tiny fraction of the antigens that babies encounter in their environment every day.

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