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Vaccines are Safe and Effective

In recognition of National Immunization Awareness Month (NIAM) this August, the Iroquois County Public Health Department is highlighting the importance of getting recommended vaccines throughout your lifetime. Vaccines reduce the risk of infection by working with the body's natural defenses to help safely develop immunity to disease. Vaccines are among the most effective ways to protect against serious diseases. While many vaccine-preventable diseases are no longer common in the United States thanks to vaccines, these diseases still exist and can spread when people aren't vaccinated. This year's measles outbreaks are a key reminder of how quickly diseases can spread when people aren't vaccinated.

There continues to be many misconceptions about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. Vaccines are thoroughly tested to ensure that they are safe and effective for children and adults to receive at the recommended ages. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ensures the safety, effectiveness, and availability of vaccines for the United States. Additionally, before the FDA licenses and approves a vaccine, the vaccine is tested extensively by its manufacturer. FDA regulations for the development of vaccines help to ensure their safety, purity, potency, and effectiveness.

According to Vonda Pruitt, Director of Nursing at the Iroquois County Public Health Department, "It is important to get vaccines at the recommended time in order to provide the best protection against serious diseases." The childhood immunization schedule is designed to provide immunity early in life, before children are likely to be exposed to serious, potentially life-threatening diseases. It is also important for women to make sure they are up to date on their vaccinations before becoming pregnant in order to provide protection for their baby. Older adults are also able to gain additional protection by getting vaccinated against diseases such as flu, whooping cough, tetanus, shingles and pneumococcal disease.

Information about recommended vaccines and vaccine safety can be found at www.cdc.gov. The Iroquois County Public Health Department has vaccines available for children and adults. Call the health department at 815-432-2483 for more information or to schedule an appointment.