



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Receives Two Awards at National Immunization Conference

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health received two awards last week at the National Immunization Conference held in Washington D.C. The first was awarded for having the second highest infant immunization rates in the United States and the second for having one of the most improved adolescent immunization rates.

“Immunization is a shared responsibility. Private physicians and nurses, local public health units, parents, the state health department and all their partners have worked hard to achieve this success for our children,” said Gov. Jack Dalrymple. “We congratulate them, and thank them for their dedication and their service.”

The six recommended vaccines on which the infant award was based prevent against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, polio, chickenpox and pneumococcal disease. According to a 2009-2010 national survey, North Dakota’s infant immunization rates for these six vaccines was 80.8 percent, compared with the U.S. rate of 71.5 percent. North Dakota’s rate was second only to Mississippi.

“We are very proud of the accomplishments we have made, but it is important that we remain vigilant in ensuring that children of any age in North Dakota are protected against vaccine-preventable diseases,” said Tracy Miller, state epidemiologist. “Vaccine preventable diseases are still occurring in the United States. Minnesota currently is experiencing an outbreak of measles, with 15 cases and eight hospitalizations.”

The second award was for improved adolescent immunization rates. All adolescents are recommended to be vaccinated against tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough, meningococcal disease and human papillomavirus. North Dakota’s rate for Tdap vaccine increased from 47.8 percent in 2008 to 71.6 percent in 2009. The 2009 national rate for Tdap is 55.6 percent. The rate

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for meningococcal vaccine increased from 47.4 percent in 2008 to 66 percent in 2009. The 2009 national rate for meningococcal vaccine is 53.6 percent. The increases in adolescent immunization rates are most likely due to middle school entry requirements in North Dakota.

“Even though North Dakota’s immunization rates are high compared to other states, almost one in five North Dakota infants and one in three North Dakota adolescents still are not adequately immunized,” said Molly Sander, Immunization Program manager for the Department of Health. “Immunizations are one of the most important ways parents can protect their children against serious diseases. Parents are encouraged to talk to their health-care provider or contact the North Dakota Department of Health to ensure that their child is up-to-date on immunizations.”

For more information, contact Molly Sander, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4556 or msander@nd.gov.

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