



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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National Infant Immunization Week Observed in North Dakota *Department of Health Reminds Parents of the Importance of Vaccinating Their Children*

Bismarck, N.D. – In observance of National Infant Immunization Week April 24 through May 1, 2010, the North Dakota Department of Health is reminding parents of the importance of vaccinating their children, according to State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D.

National Infant Immunization Week emphasizes the need to fully immunize children 24 months and younger against 14 vaccine-preventable diseases.

Each year, more than 8,500 children are born in North Dakota, and each is in need of protection from diseases that can be prevented through immunization. Many of today's parents have never seen the types of disease that modern immunizations prevent; however, these illnesses are serious and still pose a threat. Immunizations are the best way for parents to protect the health of their children for a lifetime.

“Progress continues to be made in improving immunization coverage rates for children,” Dwelle said. “However, there still is much work to be done. In fact, about 20 percent of children ages 19 months to 35 months are not up-to-date for recommended vaccines. It's important that parents check their children's immunization records and get them caught up on their vaccinations if they are behind.”

For example, pertussis, also called whooping cough, is a highly contagious, vaccine-preventable disease that has seen a substantial increase in reported cases among children in recent years. The diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine can protect against whooping cough; however, the rate for receiving the fourth dose of the vaccine, which is routinely given to children between the ages of 12 month and 18 months, lags behind other vaccination rates in North Dakota.

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“It’s important to make sure children have received all recommended doses of all recommended vaccines,” Dwelle said. “That’s one of the best ways for parents to ensure their children grow up healthy and strong.”

For more information about National Infant Immunization Week or where to get immunizations for your children, contact Abbi Pierce, immunization surveillance coordinator for the North Dakota Department of Health, at 800.472.2180 or visit www.ndhealth.gov/immunize.

-- 30 --

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