



## District 2 Public Health

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Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union and White Counties

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **April 16 - 23 is National Infant Immunization Week**

GAINESVILLE, GA -- You want to do what is best for your children and you place great importance on ways to keep them safe. One of the best ways to protect children is to make sure they have **all** of their vaccinations. Some diseases that once injured or killed thousands of children, have been eliminated completely and others are close to extinction– primarily due to safe and effective vaccines.

April 16 – 23, 2016 is 'National Infant Immunization Week'. Although your local health department provides vaccinations for infants, children and adults throughout the year, this week places a special emphasis on infant immunizations. There are many reasons to ensure that infants are vaccinated on time and as scheduled.

- 1. Immunizations can save your child's life.** Because of advances in medical science, your child can be protected against more diseases than ever before. Giving babies the recommended immunizations by age two is the best way to protect them from 14 serious childhood diseases, like whooping cough and measles. Parents are encouraged to talk to their child's doctor to ensure that their baby is up-to-date on immunizations. Protecting babies from whooping cough begins before a baby is even born. All pregnant women are recommended to receive the whooping cough vaccine, or Tdap, during the third trimester of each pregnancy to help protect their baby from whooping cough until he can receive his first whooping cough vaccine at 2 months.
- 2. Vaccination is very safe and effective.** Vaccines are only given to children after a long and careful review by scientists, doctors, and healthcare professionals. Currently, the United States has the safest, most effective vaccine supply in its history. Vaccines are also among

the most cost-effective public health tools available for preventing disease and death. They not only protect vaccinated individuals, but also help protect entire communities by preventing and reducing the spread of infectious diseases. Among children born during 1994-2013, vaccination will prevent an estimated 322 million illnesses, 21 million hospitalizations, and 732,000 deaths over the course of their lifetimes.

3. **Immunization protects others you care about.** Children in the U.S. still get vaccine-preventable diseases. In fact, we have seen resurgences of measles and whooping cough (pertussis) over the past few years. CDC reported 32,971 cases of pertussis in 2014 – a 15% increase from the 28,639 cases reported in 2013. The majority of deaths that occurred during this time were under three months of age. Unfortunately, some babies are too young to be completely vaccinated and some people may not be able to receive certain vaccinations due to severe allergies, weakened immune systems, or other reasons. To help keep them safe, it is important that you and your children who are able to get vaccinated are fully immunized. This not only protects your family, but also helps prevent the spread of these diseases to your friends and loved ones.
4. **Immunizations can save your family time and money.** Children who don't have required vaccinations, can be denied attendance at schools or daycare facilities. Some vaccine-preventable diseases can result in prolonged disabilities and can take a financial toll because of lost time at work, medical bills or long-term disability care. In contrast, getting vaccinated against these diseases is a good investment and usually covered by insurance. The Vaccines for Children program is a federally funded program that provides vaccines at no cost to children from low-income families. To find out more about the VFC program, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/> or ask your child's health care professional.
5. **Immunization protects future generations.** Vaccines have reduced and, in some cases, eliminated many diseases that killed or severely disabled people just a few generations ago. For example, smallpox vaccination eradicated that disease worldwide. Your children don't have to get smallpox shots any more because the disease no longer exists. By vaccinating children against rubella (German measles), the risk that pregnant women will pass this virus on to their fetus or newborn has been dramatically decreased, and birth defects associated with that virus no longer are seen in the United States. If we continue

vaccinating now, and vaccinating completely, parents in the future may be able to trust that some diseases of today will no longer be around to harm their children in the future.

For more information about the importance of infant immunization, vaccine schedules, and vaccine safety, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines>.

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