

## **Public Health Corner.....**

Vaccinations have been one of the top ten achievements of public health in the United States. According to the Center for Disease Control, diseases such as Smallpox, Diphtheria, Tetanus, Measles, Mumps, and Rubella have seen 95-100% declines in morbidity between 1900 and 1998 as a result of effective vaccination programs for children. The Adair County Health Department wishes to remind parents of the importance of vaccination and to communicate important vaccine safety information from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Bureau of Immunization Assessment and Assurance.

### **Vaccine Safety: Common Misconceptions**

Most parents today have never seen a case of diphtheria, measles, or other once-common diseases now preventable by vaccines. As a result, some parents wonder why their children must receive vaccinations for diseases that don't seem to exist. Myths and misinformation about vaccine safety can confuse parents who are trying to make sound decisions about their children's health care. This information outlines some of the common misconceptions about vaccinations.

#### **Misconception #1: Diseases are rare now. Vaccines are not really necessary.**

Certain diseases are rare in the United States because of vaccines, but are much more common in other parts of the world. Because of travel and immigration, many diseases once controlled in the United States are re-emerging. If we stopped using vaccines, diseases would spread very quickly – and many children would become very ill.

Individuals should be vaccinated for two reasons. The first is to protect themselves. Even if we think our chances of getting any of these vaccine preventable diseases are small, the diseases still exist and can still infect anyone who is not protected.

The second reason to get vaccinated is to protect those around us. There is a small number of people who cannot be vaccinated (because of severe allergies to vaccine components), and a small percentage of people who do not respond to vaccines. These people are susceptible to disease, and their only hope of protection is that people around them are immune and cannot pass diseases on to them. A successful vaccination program depends on the cooperation of every individual to ensure the good of all.

#### **Misconception #2: My child cannot receive vaccinations if she has a cold, fever or is taking antibiotics.**

Children can still be vaccinated if he or she has a mild illness, a low-grade fever, or is taking antibiotics.

#### **Misconception #3: The majority of people who get disease have been vaccinated.**

Most routine childhood vaccines are effective for 85% to 95% of recipients. In order to make vaccines safer than the disease, the bacteria or virus is killed or weakened. Some vaccinated individuals do not develop immunity, because of reasons specific to the individual, (e.g. those individuals with a genetic pre-disposition that precludes their ability to develop an immune response.)

**Misconception #4: A lot of children get hurt by vaccines. Vaccines cause Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and Autism.**

Severe side effects from vaccines are very rare (less than 1%). It is a much greater health risk not to get vaccinated. Some children may have mild side effects, such as crankiness, soreness or a slight fever that usually only last a few hours. However, getting the disease can be far more dangerous and painful.

There is no known cause of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). The age at which many children die from SIDS is similar to the age when vaccines are first recommended.

There is no known connection between vaccine and Autism. In some children, signs of Autism have appeared around the time routine vaccinations are given. Research has not shown vaccinations to be a cause of Autism.

**Misconception #5: It's dangerous to give so many vaccines at the same.**

Studies show that giving several vaccines at one visit is safe and effective.

A number of studies have been conducted to examine the effects of giving various combinations of vaccines simultaneously. These studies have shown that the recommended vaccines are as effective in combination as they are individually, and that these combinations carry no greater risk for adverse side effects.

There are two reasons for giving a child several vaccinations during the same visit. First, children should be immunized as early as possible to give them protection during the vulnerable early months of their lives. This generally means giving inactivated vaccines beginning at two months and live vaccines at 12 months. That means various vaccine doses tend to be due at the same time. Second, giving several vaccinations at the same time will mean fewer office visits for vaccinations, which saves parent's time and money, and results in less stress for the child.

For additional information relating to vaccine safety, please visit the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services' Immunization web site at [www.dhss.mo.gov/living/wellness/immunizations/index.php](http://www.dhss.mo.gov/living/wellness/immunizations/index.php) or call the Adair County Health Department at 660-665-8491.

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