



## August is National Immunization Awareness Month

National Immunization Awareness Month (NIAM) is an annual observance to highlight the importance of vaccination for people of all ages.

NIAM was established to encourage people of all ages to make sure they are up to date on the vaccines recommended for them. Communities have continued to use the month of August each year to raise awareness about the important role vaccines play in preventing serious, sometimes deadly, diseases. Immunization is a shared responsibility. Families, healthcare professionals, and public health officials must work together to help protect the entire community.

### **Vaccines protect against serious diseases.**

Vaccines are among the most successful and cost-effective public health tools available for preventing disease and death. In the United States, vaccines have greatly reduced infectious diseases that once routinely killed or harmed many infants, children, and adults. However, the viruses and bacteria that cause vaccine-preventable disease and death still exist and can be passed on to people who are not protected by vaccines. 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. Vaccination is important because it not only protects the person receiving the vaccine, but also helps prevent the spread of certain diseases, especially to those that are most vulnerable to serious complications, such as infants and young children, elderly, and those with chronic conditions and weakened immune systems.

### **These diseases still exist and outbreaks do occur.**

Many vaccine preventable diseases are still common in many parts of the world. For example, measles is brought into the United States by unvaccinated travelers who are infected while in other countries. When measles gets into communities of unvaccinated people in the U.S. (such as people who refuse vaccines for religious, philosophical or personal reasons), outbreaks are more likely to occur. Last year's measles outbreak was a perfect example of how quickly infectious diseases can spread when they reach groups of people who aren't vaccinated. Since measles was declared eliminated in the United States in 2000, the annual number of people reported to have measles ranged from a low of 37 people in 2004 to a high of 668 people in 2014. In 2014 there were 23 outbreaks affecting 668 people from 27 states. Outbreaks of whooping cough have also occurred in the United States over the past few years.

### **Vaccines are recommended throughout our lives.**

**Vaccines aren't just for children.** Vaccines are recommended throughout our lives based on age, lifestyle, occupation, travel destinations, medical conditions and vaccines received in the past. Certain factors (such as health conditions) may put you at higher risk for getting some diseases or having more serious illness if you were to get sick. Any of these diseases could be serious – even if you are healthy.

### **Vaccines are very safe.**

Vaccines are thoroughly tested before licensing and carefully monitored even after they are licensed to ensure that they are very safe. Side effects from vaccines are usually mild and temporary. Some people may have allergic reactions to certain vaccines, but serious and long-term side effects are rare.

### **Talk to your health care professional to make sure your family is up to date on all the recommended vaccines.**

Back-to-school appointments are a perfect time to make sure your children are up-to-date on all the vaccines recommended for them. Because vaccines aren't just for kids, you can take CDC's Adult Vaccine Quiz to find out which vaccines may be recommended for you. Take the printout to discuss with your doctor.

Source: National Immunization Awareness Month Media Tool Kit

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