

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Contact:**

Lieske Giese, RN, MSPH
Director/Health Officer
715-839-4718
After 5:00 p.m. – 715-514-7881 (cell)
Elizabeth.Giese@co.eau-claire.wi.us

What to Know about Vaccines

Eau Claire, WI, September 22, 2016 – We all need vaccines throughout our lives to help protect against serious diseases. Every year, tens of thousands of Americans get sick from diseases that could be prevented by vaccines. Some people are hospitalized, some even die. Immunization can protect against these diseases. It is a *critical* step in protecting not only ourselves, but those who are most vulnerable to illness - infants and young children, the elderly, and those with chronic conditions and weakened immune systems.

In a 2014 report, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated that vaccinations will prevent more than 21 million hospitalizations and 732,000 deaths among children born in the last 20 years. “Immunization has had an enormous impact on improving the health of children in the United States,” states Lieske Giese, Eau Claire City-County Health Department Director, “most parents today have never seen first-hand the devastating consequences that vaccine-preventable diseases have on a child, a family, or a community.”

Vaccines are recommended for children, teens, and adults based on different factors like age, health conditions, lifestyle, jobs, and travel. CDC updates recommendations every year based on the latest research and science.

Outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases can and do still happen in communities across the U.S. Vaccines have greatly reduced infectious diseases that once regularly harmed or killed many infants, children, and adults. However, the germs that cause vaccine-preventable disease still exist and can be spread to people who are not protected by vaccines. For example, even though measles was declared to be eliminated from the U.S. in 2000, it is still common in other countries. Unvaccinated travelers have gotten measles while traveling abroad and spread the disease to others in the U.S. when they have returned. This has led to a number of outbreaks in recent years. Because measles is a highly contagious disease, it can spread quickly among unvaccinated people. CDC Director Tom Frieden, explains “Current outbreaks of measles in the U.S. serve as a reminder that these diseases are only a plane ride away. Borders can't stop measles, but vaccination can.”

CDC and FDA take many steps to make sure vaccines are very safe. Before a vaccine is approved for use in the U.S., it goes through years of careful testing to make sure it is safe and effective. Highly trained scientists and doctors at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) evaluate the results of these clinical studies. FDA also inspects the sites where vaccines are made to make sure they follow strict manufacturing guidelines. Once a vaccine is licensed, FDA and CDC continue to monitor its use and make sure there are no safety concerns.

Like any medication, vaccines can cause side effects. In most cases, side effects are mild (such as soreness at injection site) but go away within a few days. Severe, long-lasting side effects from vaccines are rare.

Giese affirms, “What we know is this: serious diseases still exist, but we now have safe and proven vaccinations that can prevent many of these diseases and save lives.”

For more information about vaccinations, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines>.

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