

April 26, 2011

News Release

For Immediate Release

Health Department Highlights National Infant Immunization Week

Each year, thousands of children become ill from diseases that could have been prevented by basic childhood immunizations. Countless more miss time from day care and school because they are under-immunized or inappropriately immunized.

During the week of April 23-30, 2011 the Springfield-Greene County Health Department will observe National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention initiative designed to raise awareness about the importance of childhood immunizations.

Vaccine-preventable diseases still circulate in the United States and around the world, so continued vaccination is necessary to protect everyone from potential outbreaks. One example of the seriousness of vaccine-preventable diseases was the California whooping cough epidemic of 2010, resulting in the death of 10 infants. Nationally, more than 20,000 cases of the whooping cough were reported in 2010 and cases have been on the rise in Greene County over the past two years as well. Vaccines are among the most safe, successful and cost-effective public health tools available for preventing disease and death. They not only help protect vaccinated individuals, but also help protect entire communities by preventing and reducing the spread of infectious diseases.

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department Westside Public Health Center offers infant immunizations for preventable diseases so that parents can protect their children against serious diseases. For more information on immunizations, visit www.springfieldmo.gov/health/immunizations.html. You may also contact Westside Public Health Center at 417-874-1220.

"Vaccines play a critical role in preventing illness in children as well as the community. We urge parents to continue to vaccinate their children but also make sure their own vaccinations are up-to-date. National Infant Immunization Week offers a reminder to us all to take care of the ones we love the most," said Ruth Brown, BSN, RN, Immunization Coordinator, Springfield-Greene County Health Department.

On April 26, 2011 at 6:30 pm the Southwest Missouri Pediatric Immunization Coalition and Jordan Valley Community Health Center will host a childcare provider seminar in conjunction with the quarterly meeting of the coalition in observance of National Infant Immunization Week. The seminar will give vital information about vaccines and the importance of children receiving vaccines on time.

The childcare provider seminar in conjunction with the quarterly meeting will be held at St. John's Catherine McCauley Conference Center, 1235 E. Cherokee, Springfield, Mo 65804. Childcare Providers, the media, health professionals, and community members are encouraged to attend. For more information and to RSVP, call Missy Penkalski at 417-693-1797 or email mpenkalski@jordanvalley.org

For more information contact: Katie Towns-Jeter MPH, Public Information Administrator, 417-874-1205



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