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## **Mid-Michigan District Health Department stresses importance of immunizations**

ITHACA/STANTON/ST.JOHNS~ As parents we want what is best for our children and will go to great lengths to spare them from harm. But quite often parents with the best of intentions overlook one critical tool that could ensure their child lives a long and healthy life.

Immunizations are one of the most important ways a parent can protect their child's health and one of the most successful and cost-effective public health tools for preventing serious disease.

Unfortunately, many parents don't understand the importance of childhood immunization and the number of diseases that can be prevented. Most of today's parents are not familiar with these diseases and the suffering they can cause and, therefore, are less concerned about the need for immunization compared to other parental priorities. However, these diseases are not diseases of the past. They are still with us and circulating in many parts of the world.

In 2008 there have been more cases of measles in the United States since 1997. So far this year, seven distinct measles outbreaks, including four in Michigan, with a total of more than 130 cases, have been reported in the United States. Each of the cases involved largely un-immunized groups and was sparked by a case from another part of the world.

Despite recent gains in childhood immunization coverage; over 1 million of our nation's two year olds are still missing one or more of the recommended immunizations. By the time a child reaches their 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday, they should receive the following immunizations:

- 3 doses of Hepatitis B
- 4 doses of DTaP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis)
- 4 doses of Hib (H. Influenza, type b)
- 3 doses of Polio
- 1 dose of MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella)
- Pneumococcal (number of doses vary according to age in which series began)

In addition, children ages 0 – 5 should also receive the following:

- 3 doses of Rotavirus
- Annual influenza vaccine, especially for children ages 6-59 months
- A total of 2 doses of chicken pox vaccine

Low immunization coverage is an issue that impacts the entire community. Therefore, community resources, and more importantly, community participation is essential to increasing immunization coverage. Andrea Tabor, Community Health and Education Division Director for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD), reminds everyone that "A decision to vaccinate a child not only protects that individual child, but protects the community as well by reducing the spread of disease to those who have not been vaccinated either by choice or because of medical reasons.

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## 2~ Immunizations

Parents and health care providers must work together to ensure that all children are fully immunized. As the new school year approaches, MMDHD urges all parents to consult with their health care provider if they are unsure whether or not their child's immunization record is up-to-date.

For more information visit [www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org) or contact the MMDHD branch office nearest you:

Clinton Branch Office: 989-224-2195

Gratiot Branch Office: 989-875-3681

Montcalm Branch Office: 989-831-5237

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