

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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August is 'Immunization Awareness Month'

LAS VEGAS – Who needs vaccines?

Consider this. In 1920, there were 469,924 cases of measles and more than 7,500 deaths, and 147,991 diphtheria cases with 13,000 deaths in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Polio paralyzed between 13,000 and 20,000 Americans each year before the introduction of an effective vaccine in 1955. The last indigenously acquired case of polio in the United States was identified in 1979. Smallpox, once a worldwide scourge, has been eradicated globally. Rubella is no longer a threat to pregnant women or their unborn children. Most recent medical school graduates will never see a case of measles in their practice. Vaccination campaigns are credited with this success.

“Vaccination against infectious diseases is among the greatest public health accomplishments of the 20th century. Immunizations have saved millions of lives,” said Dr. John Middaugh, interim chief health officer. “Childhood vaccines and adult immunizations have helped to eliminate serious and life threatening illnesses that were once very common. Until there was a vaccine, polio epidemics were frightening and left thousands of people, many of whom were children, paralyzed. Through large-scale vaccination programs, polio was certified as eradicated in the Americas more than 15 years ago.”

During the past decade, vaccine safety has been questioned by some. Vaccines are among the most studied health products. They are continually monitored for safety; however, like any medication, vaccines can cause some side effects. The health district, the CDC and health care providers remind parents that the decision to not vaccinate a child also involves risks that could put the child and others who are in contact with him or her at risk of contracting potentially deadly illnesses.

Adults should remember to keep their immunization status up to date as well and there are several vaccines they should receive to maintain a healthy life. The CDC recommends annual seasonal flu shots for everyone, especially those over age 50. Older adults should also receive the vaccine to prevent pneumococcal disease, especially people over age 65, and the shingles vaccine for people 60 and over.

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Immunization Awareness Month – add one

Other immunizations for adults should include a dose of Tdap in place of their next tetanus booster. Tdap vaccine protects against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough). Adults who are caring for infants should receive the Tdap vaccine as soon as possible regardless of when their tetanus booster is due if they have not previously received a dose of Tdap vaccine. Adults should discuss obtaining the hepatitis A and B immunizations with their health care provider. The vaccine against human papilloma virus (HPV) is recommended for young men and women if they were not vaccinated as adolescents. Adults should discuss immunizations with a health care provider if they have any questions.

Updated information about the Southern Nevada Health District can be found on Facebook www.facebook.com/SouthernNevadaHealthDistrict, on YouTube www.youtube.com/SNHealthDistrict or Twitter: www.twitter.com/SNHDinfo. The health district is now available in Spanish on Twitter www.twitter.com/TuSNHD. Don't have a Twitter account? Follow the health district on your phone by texting "follow SNHDinfo" to 40404.