



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 6, 2014

August is National Immunization Awareness Month

LAS VEGAS – Who needs vaccines?

In 1920, there were 469,924 cases of measles and more than 7,500 deaths, and 147,991 diphtheria cases with 13,000 deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Mortality and Morbidity Weekly published in April 1999. Polio paralyzed between 13,000 and 20,000 Americans each year before the introduction of an effective vaccine in 1955 with the last indigenously acquired case in the United States was identified in 1979. Smallpox, once a worldwide scourge, has been eradicated globally.

“Immunizations are considered one of the 20th century's greatest public health accomplishments. They have helped to eliminate serious and life threatening illnesses and have saved millions of lives,” said Dr. Joseph Iser, Southern Nevada Health District chief health officer. “We're seeing that those illnesses continue to wreak havoc around the world with polio outbreaks in the Middle East as an example. Some of us remember polio epidemics that were frightening and left thousands of people, many of whom were children, paralyzed. Through large-scale public health vaccination programs, polio was certified as eradicated in the Americas more than 15 years ago.”

When vaccination rates wane, diseases once thought to be eliminated re-occur. California recently announced its largest pertussis outbreak in decades with more than 4,500 confirmed cases. According to the CDC, there have been 585 measles cases reported in the US since Jan. 1, a majority of these occurred in people who are unvaccinated. There have been no reported measles cases in Southern Nevada.

During the past decade, vaccine safety has been questioned. Vaccines are among the most studied health products. They are continually monitored for safety; however, like any medication, vaccines can cause some side effects, primarily local and very limited inflammation at the site of injection. 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 at risk of contracting a potentially deadly illness.

Adults should remember to discuss their own immunization status with their healthcare providers or physicians, especially if they are travelling to areas where diseases still occur. The CDC recommends annual seasonal flu shots for most people especially those over age 50, a pneumonia shot for seniors, and the shingles vaccine for people age 60 and over.

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Other immunizations for adults should include a dose of Tdap in place of their next tetanus booster, hepatitis A and B immunizations, the HPV vaccine for young women up to the age of 26. Adult immunizations are also important for parents and caregivers of infants who are too young to be vaccinated against diseases like pertussis.

The Southern Nevada Health District offers childhood and adult immunizations at its public health facilities Monday – Friday. Contact the immunization clinic (702) 759-0850 or visit www.SNHD.info for locations, hours, and costs. Back-to-school immunizations are available year round and a special clinic is scheduled for 9a.m.-1p.m., Sat. Aug. 23 at the health district's main location, 330 S. Valley View.

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.