FROM THE PARISH HEALTH MINISTRY TEAM

**July is National Immunization Awareness Month**

Vaccines have been proven to prevent infectious diseases that can cause serious illness and even death. There are 14 diseases covered in the series of childhood vaccines recommended from birth to 6 years old. Some may seem rare or non-existent (e.g., Polio), but we continue to vaccinate since it remains a threat in other countries.

Serious side effects from vaccines are very rare, especially when you consider the millions of doses given over the years. Vaccine safety is monitored very closely through a federal program and US vaccine supplies are currently the safest in our history. Even so, some people still choose to believe outdated claims like that of vaccines causing autism when scientific research has shown no association. Having the infection (e.g., measles) may provide higher levels of immunity but, the child and others they inadvertently expose are placed at risk for serious illness and even death. Childhood vaccinations are the safest way to protect everyone.

Immunization recommendations and schedules are too complex to include here so please go to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website for this information. You can also access vaccine specific information sheets, and much more. ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) then find “Vaccines and Immunizations” under the tab: “Healthy Living”)

It is important to stay on schedule with vaccinations since it is designed to protect young children when they are most vulnerable to serious harm, before they are likely to be exposed. Since immunity can fade over time after some vaccines, additional doses are required as they get older.

Older kids (7 – 18 years old) need protection from two other diseases they may encounter. This age group becomes at risk for Meningococcal disease and Human Papillomavirus (HPV) infection. Vaccines against these are recommended beginning at age 11-12.

It is very important to keep a record of vaccinations! It should include the name of the vaccine, dose, date given, and who gave it so you can go back to that office for any official documentation when needed. You will likely be asked to provide it for day care, school, camp, or an athletic team. Some vaccinations may be reported by the doctor’s office in a state-wide database, but this may not include all. Ask your child’s doctor to determine what their practice is. A tracking form that also includes a development tracker can be downloaded from the CDC website.

Maintaining a tracking record will also help you to be prepared. Check it before each doctor visit to identify upcoming vaccinations, go to the CDC website to obtain information about the vaccine, and make a list of things you would like to discuss. Remember, healthcare is a partnership!

Submitted by: Vicky Shelton, D.Ph.

CSUMC Parish Health Ministry Team

July 2019