



For more information contact:
Sarah Lieu
Public Information Specialist
Division of Immunization Services
Telephone: (304) 356-4099
Sarah.M.Lieu@wv.gov

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August is National Immunization Awareness Month

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Bureau for Public Health, Division of Immunization Services joins partners nationwide in recognizing August as National Immunization Awareness Month.

“While immunizations have significantly reduced the incidence of many serious infectious diseases, vaccination rates in West Virginia for some diseases do not meet national public health goals,” said Dr. Letitia Tierney, Commissioner of the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health and State Health Officer.

West Virginia has one of the highest immunization rates for school-age children, but the second lowest immunization rate for children younger than two. This gap leaves young children susceptible to vaccine preventable diseases such as measles and pertussis (also called whooping cough).

“Vaccines are important to protect your child and others in the community from infectious diseases,” Dr. Tierney said. “Talk to your doctor or other health care professional to make sure your child is up-to-date on all the vaccines he or she needs.”

Childhood vaccines protect against 14 serious and potentially life-threatening diseases including Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Influenza, Measles, Rotavirus, Haemophilus Influenzae type B, Tetanus (Lockjaw), Mumps, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Pneumococcal Disease, Polio, Rubella (German Measles) and Varicella (Chickenpox).

The need for vaccination does not end in early childhood. School-age children need booster shots to give continued protection against many childhood diseases. Immunizations create a shield of protection at school and at home.

Adults also need vaccines to protect against serious diseases such as the flu, shingles and pneumonia.

To learn more about vaccinations, visit www.immunization.wv.gov.

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