

Jackson County Department of Public Health

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VACCINATING ON TIME IS IMPORTANT FOR DISEASE PROTECTION

In honor of National Infant Immunization Week, celebrated April 21-28, the Jackson County Department of Public Health (JCDPH) would like remind the community that vaccinating children on time is the best way to protect them against 14 serious and potentially deadly diseases before their second birthday.

“The recommended immunization schedule is designed to protect babies early in life, when they are vulnerable and before it’s likely that they will be exposed to diseases,” said Carla Morgan, Nursing Supervisor with JCDPH.

Public health and medical experts base their vaccine recommendations on many factors. They study information about diseases and vaccines very carefully to decide which vaccines kids should get and when they should get them for best protection.

Although a number of vaccines a child needs in the first two years may seem like a lot, doctors know a great deal about the human immune system, and they know that a healthy baby’s immune system can handle getting all vaccines when they are recommended. Morgan cautions against parents delaying vaccination. “There is no known benefit to delaying vaccination. In fact, it puts babies at risk of getting sick because they are left vulnerable to catch serious diseases during the time they are not protected by vaccines.”

When parents choose not to vaccinate or to follow a delayed schedule, children are left unprotected against diseases that still circulate in this country, like measles and whooping cough. Since 2010, we have seen between 10,000 and 50,000 cases of whooping cough each year in the United States. And, up to 20 babies die from whooping cough each year in the United States. Most whooping cough deaths are among babies who are too young to be protected by their own vaccination.

Parents who are concerned about the number of shots given at one time can reduce the number given at a visit by using the flexibility build into the recommended immunization schedule. For example, the third dose of hepatitis B vaccine can be given at 6 through 18 months of age. Parents can work with their child’s healthcare provider to have their child get this dose at any time during that age range.

“We, at the Health Department, strive to ensure all kids are vaccinated on time,” says Morgan, “Getting children all the vaccines they need by age two is one of the best things a parent can do to help keep their children safe and healthy.”

For questions about the child immunization schedule, call the Health Department at 828-586-8994 or visit <http://health.jacksonnc.org/immunizationsvaccinations>.

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