



Feature Column

Towards A Healthier Arkansas

A Message from the Arkansas Department of Health

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Are Childhood Diseases a Thing of the Past?

(Little Rock) – In America today we no longer see children die in large numbers from measles, a disease that killed many small children and adults in days gone by. In fact, the recent measles outbreak in fifteen states that saw more than 120 people with the disease took most people by surprise. Aren't measles, mumps, diphtheria, polio, or any of a number of other diseases that we used to see under control these days?

Unfortunately, while these diseases have all but disappeared in this country, the causes are still around, and the need to be vaccinated to protect yourself and your children is just as important as ever. This year's measles outbreak should serve as a reminder of what can happen when children and adults are not vaccinated. The fact is, if your children are not protected by the safe, effective vaccines that are available today, they are at risk, and so are the other people that that may come into contact with if they become infected.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has placed vaccinations at the top of the list of the most significant achievements in public health in the last century. Today's science has provided us with the best immunity from disease that we've ever had. New vaccines are tested extensively before they are licensed, and once they are in use, they are held to the very highest standard of safety, and their use is continually monitored by the CDC.

If you aren't sure whether your children are up-to-date on all their vaccinations, talk to your family doctor or visit any Local County Health Unit. If your children have fallen behind, it is important to find out what needs to be done to get caught up. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website is also a good source for information on vaccination schedules and related issues: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/> .

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But vaccinations aren't just for children. According to the National Network for Immunization Information, up to 60,000 adults die every year in the United States from vaccine-preventable diseases or their complications. These diseases include influenza, pneumococcal disease, and tetanus among others. If you aren't sure whether you have the necessary protection you need, it's a good idea to discuss these issues with your doctor.

The National Network for Immunization Information (NNii) provides up-to-date, science-based information to healthcare professionals, the media, and the public -- everyone who needs to know the facts about vaccines and immunization: <http://www.immunizationinfo.org/> .

August is National Immunization Awareness month. Why not take this opportunity to ask your doctor if your family is protected?

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