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## **National Infant Immunization Week raises awareness, highlights achievements**

CHARLEVOIX – In the 1950’s, nearly every child developed measles, and unfortunately, some even died from this serious disease. Yet many of today’s practicing physicians have never seen a case of measles, due to the success of childhood vaccines.

National Infant Immunization Week is an annual observance to highlight the importance of protecting infants from vaccine-preventable diseases and celebrate the achievements of immunization programs and their partners in promoting healthy communities. This year’s campaign takes place April 16-23.

“Infants who don’t receive recommended vaccines are vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases, which can be severe and life-threatening,” said Dr. Joshua Meyerson, Medical Director at the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. “Every dose of every vaccine is important to protect your child and others from infectious diseases.”

Meyerson encourages parents and guardians to discuss their infant’s vaccinations with their healthcare providers. It’s also important for women who are pregnant to be up-to-date with their immunizations, in order to protect their infants and those around them.

Several important milestones already have been reached in controlling vaccine-preventable diseases among infants worldwide. Vaccines have drastically reduced infant death and disability caused by preventable diseases in the United States. Today’s childhood vaccines protect against serious and potentially life-threatening diseases, including polio, measles, pertussis (whooping cough), meningitis, and chickenpox.

It’s easy to think of these as ailments of the past, but they continue to be a threat today. Children in the U.S. can—and do—still contract some of these diseases.

One local example is the recent increase in pertussis (whooping cough) cases. In 2014 and 2015, the Health Department saw a rise in pertussis cases within its jurisdiction: Antrim County had 8 reported cases, while Otsego had 6 and Charlevoix had 5 reports. Emmet County had 2 cases. Sixteen of these 21 cases were reported in children under the age of 15.

To learn more about immunizations or to schedule an appointment, call the Health Department at **(800) 432-4121**, or visit [www.nwhealth.org](http://www.nwhealth.org) for more information. The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego Counties.

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