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Health Dept encourages childhood, adult vaccinations

Woodstock IL – Twenty years ago, diseases such as diphtheria, measles and pertussis (or whooping cough) was commonplace. Today, thanks to vaccinations, these and 15 other diseases are preventable. Making sure children receive lifesaving vaccines is the only way to keep these diseases a thing of the past. McHenry County Department of Health (MCDH) reminds parents to not only get their children vaccinated but to receive vaccines for themselves as well.

Cases of pertussis appear to be on the rise, both locally and across the U.S. McHenry County saw 16 cases of pertussis in 2008; 60 cases in 2009. To combat pertussis, the Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis) vaccine is recommended for parents of infants, aged birth through 12 months of age. A highly contagious upper respiratory infection, pertussis is spread through the air by coughing or sneezing. Pertussis starts like the common cold, with runny nose or congestion, sneezing, and maybe mild cough or fever but after 1–2 weeks, severe coughing begins. It is worse for very young children; more than half of infants less than 1 year of age who get the disease must be hospitalized. Vaccinating persons with Tdap who are in close contact with infants will help prevent adult-to-child transmission. To be fully protected, children 15-18 months old need 4 doses; adolescents aged 10 years and adults up to age 64 years should receive one dose.

Although Thimerosal was removed from new vaccines for children in 2001, worries still linger about the link between the mercury-containing preservative thimerosal and autism which scientific research has shown no connection. Parents should contact MCDH or a physician if they have concerns. Delaying vaccination puts children at greater risk for illness. Parents are strongly advised to stay up to date on their children's vaccinations and follow the latest CDC vaccination guidelines www.cdc.gov/vaccines.

Families enrolled in MCDH's Women, Infant and Children (WIC) program are eligible to receive Tdap vaccinations at low or no cost depending on medical coverage. Individuals whose insurance does not cover vaccines are also eligible. Appointments are available at 815-334-4536. For more information, visit www.mcdh.info.

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"Working to prevent disease and promote health and safety for all people of McHenry County since 1966."