

**Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Protect Your Child – Immunize!**

You want to do what is best for your child. You use car seats, baby gates and other devices to keep them safe. But, did you know that one of the best ways to protect your child is to make sure they have **all** of their shots?

**Immunizations can save your child's life.** Because of medical advances, your child can be protected against more diseases than ever before. Diseases that once injured or killed children have been eliminated or are close to being wiped out – primarily due to safe and effective vaccines. Polio was once America's most-feared disease. But today, thanks to vaccination, there are no reported cases of polio in the United States.

**Vaccination is very safe and effective.** Vaccines are only given to children after a long, careful review by scientists, doctors, and healthcare professionals. Getting a shot may cause discomfort and tenderness at the injection site but this discomfort does not compare to the pain and trauma of getting the actual disease these vaccines prevent. Since allergic reactions to vaccines are very rare, the prevention benefits of getting the shots far outweigh their possible side effects.

**Immunization protects others you care about.** Children still get vaccine-preventable diseases. Cases of measles and whooping cough (pertussis) are on the rise. The tri-counties reported 14 cases of whooping cough in 2010. The U.S. reported over 21,000 cases. Twenty-six of U.S. cases resulted in death. These deaths occurred mostly in children under six months of age. Unfortunately, some babies are too young to be completely vaccinated. Other people may not be able to get certain shots due to severe allergies, weakened immune systems or other chronic conditions. To help keep

everyone safe, it is important that you and your children who are able to get vaccinated are fully immunized. This protects your family, as well as limits the spread of disease to your friends and loved ones.

**Immunizations can save your family time and money.** A child with a vaccine-preventable disease can be denied attendance at schools or daycare facilities. Some vaccine-preventable diseases can result in long illnesses. The financial costs to the family because of lost time at work, medical bills or ongoing care can be considerable. In contrast, getting vaccinated is a good investment and is usually covered by insurance. According to JoAnn Wilczynski, the health department's Prevention Services Director, "Every \$1 spent to immunize saves more than \$10 that would have been spent on illness and even death from preventable diseases. To assist low income families, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency provides **Vaccines for Children**, a federally funded program. This program provides vaccines at no cost to qualifying children."

**Immunization protects future generations.** Vaccines have reduced or eliminated many diseases that killed or disabled people just a few generations ago. Vaccination rid the world of smallpox. As a result, children are no longer required to get smallpox shots. Vaccinating children against rubella (German measles) has dramatically reduced the risk that pregnant women will pass this virus on to their newborn. Birth defects associated with that virus no longer are seen in the U.S. By vaccinating now and vaccinating completely, parents in the future may be able to trust that some diseases of today will no longer be around to harm their children in the future.

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency offers immunization clinics to the community at each of its tri-county offices. To learn more about the importance of infant/childhood immunizations or to schedule a visit, check out our website at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org).

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