

# Children's Health

## Delaying Vaccinations Puts Young Children At Risk

(NAPSA)—Recent outbreaks in the U.S. of measles, whooping cough and the flu among young children have refocused Americans' ideas about the importance of vaccinations. This is especially true because diseases such as mumps, measles, polio and rubella—virtually eradicated in this country—are just a plane ride away. In fact, the number of measles cases in England and Wales jumped more than 30 percent last year—their highest level since 1995.

For a young child, regular vaccinations are an important part of ensuring overall health. Vaccines have been shown to protect and save lives. Yet despite the overwhelming scientific evidence proving the benefits of immunizations, there are still parents who question the value of vaccines.

### Why Vaccinate?

Before the development of vaccines, thousands of babies died or were seriously disabled every year from a variety of now-preventable diseases. But because immunization programs of the 20th century were so successful, many of today's young parents have never seen these diseases and do not understand that the risk for them is still real.

According to the recommended immunization schedule, children should be protected from 14 preventable diseases by age 2. Yet 2.1 million children in the United States are not vaccinated on time, putting them at risk for serious illness. According to Every Child By Two, a nonprofit organization founded by former First Lady Rosalynn Carter and former First Lady of Arkansas Betty Bumpers, it is critical for parents to realize that today's vaccines are safe for children. In fact, when it comes to



**Protecting your child's health means getting him or her vaccinated on time, every time.**

vaccines, the biggest risk is being misinformed.

"Immunizations are a medical miracle," says Paul Offit, M.D., Chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases and Director of the Vaccine Education Center at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. "They are the most powerful tools to control and potentially eliminate diseases that have caused death and lifelong disability for millions of people. Too many children, adolescents and adults in our country and worldwide continue to fall prey to deadly vaccine-preventable diseases each year."

To help keep track of your children's many immunizations, ask your doctor to put their vaccination records into your local immunization registry.

Every Child By Two, the Campaign for Early Childhood Immunization, works to educate families about the need for all children to receive timely immunizations and continues to seek methods to institutionalize vaccine delivery and ensure access to vaccines for all children. For more information, including the immunization schedule, visit the Web site at [www.ecbt.org](http://www.ecbt.org).