

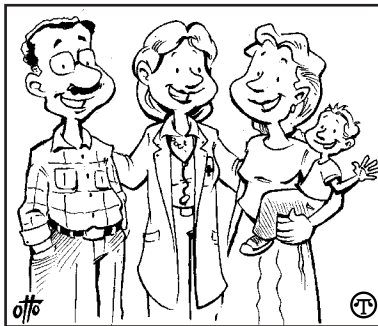
HEALTH News & Notes

Vaccines: A Safe And Simple Way To Keep Healthy

(NAPS)—Imagine a world without vaccines. Before vaccination, as many as 20,000 Americans—mostly children—became paralyzed from polio. There were 150,000 cases and more than 5,000 deaths annually from pertussis (whooping cough). German measles affected thousands of people and caused infants to be born deaf, blind and mentally retarded.

Today, because of safe and effective vaccines, this is no longer the case. In fact, vaccination against polio has virtually eliminated the disease from the entire Western Hemisphere, which includes North and South America. Whooping cough vaccine has dramatically reduced the disease so that fewer than 7,000 cases are reported annually. Vaccine for German measles has reduced the number of infected infants to fewer than five cases annually.

“Vaccines have helped to eliminate an enormous burden of disease from our society, preventing infections and saving lives,” says William Schaffner, M.D., professor and chairman of the department of preventive medicine at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine in Nashville, Tennessee. “Vaccination truly demonstrates the benefit of modern medicine and is one of the greatest triumphs in



Vaccinations are important for both children and adults to halt the spread of disease.

national health.”

Childhood immunizations in the United States have increased significantly during the past decade to near record high levels. Despite this, people may be misinformed about the safety of vaccines.

“Vaccines are safe,” says Dr. Schaffner. “Most side effects are minor, such as tenderness where the shot was given, headaches or drowsiness or a mild fever. The chances of having a more serious or harmful reaction to a vaccine are small compared to the potential consequences you or your child face if not vaccinated.”

Vaccines, like all medications, are carefully tested to prove their safety and effectiveness. Even after vaccines are approved by the

U.S. Food and Drug Administration, they continue to be carefully scrutinized and monitored for safety by the federal government and medical community, including physicians and nurses, scientists and researchers, as well as hospital personnel and public health officials.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination for children and adults. Childhood vaccinations are listed in the routine childhood vaccination schedule on the Web site for the American Academy of Pediatrics. Vaccines can protect adults from infectious diseases such as influenza, hepatitis and pneumococcal disease. Infectious disease not only impacts an individual, but also puts the health of others at risk. Parents and family members need to protect themselves against disease, but also consider the added benefit to the community at large by preventing the spread of disease to others.

For more information about vaccination and safety, speak to your physician and/or public health department, and visit the CDC Web site at www.cdc.gov, the American Academy of Pediatrics at www.aap.org and the National Network for Immunization Information at www.immunizationinfo.org.