



PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

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Immunization Saves Lives

Stonewall, MB - The week of April 24th to May 1st, 2010 marks National Immunization Awareness Week in Canada. Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. David Butler-Jones reminds us that while immunization has saved more lives in Canada than any other health intervention, vaccine-preventable diseases still cause illness in un-immunized people.

A century ago, because of infectious diseases, too many children never saw their 5th birthday. Just talk to today's seniors, and they can share their insight about some of these devastating illnesses from just 50 years ago. Many grandparents can tell you about someone they knew who had polio. Today, almost all the same diseases exist, but most people are protected by immunization. But there are groups of un-immunized individuals vulnerable to disease, as we have seen with recent outbreaks of mumps and measles in Canada.

Also, some vaccines will not provide life-long immunity against some diseases such as tetanus (lockjaw) and diphtheria. A booster shot is recommended every ten years to maintain immunity. Unlike other vaccine preventable diseases, tetanus is not passed from person to person. This means that every person needs to be immunized to be protected. With spring in full-swing, folks are starting to get their hands dirty with gardening and other outdoor projects. The bacteria that cause tetanus live in soil, dirt and dust, and even a small amount can lead to illness if you are not protected.

Manitoba Health's Immunization program provides free immunizations according to the provincial schedule. National Immunization Awareness Week reminds us of the importance of immunization to preserve the good health of our children, families and communities. This is a great time to check your immunization status with your physician or local public health office. You can be part of the success of immunization in Canada!