



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
Karen E. Timberlake, Secretary

Immunizations Are Key to Good Health

By Karen Timberlake

The Department of Health Services works with colleagues around the state to help keep you healthy. We monitor for disease outbreaks and track other diseases that make us ill. But that isn't all we do.

We try to prevent these illness and outbreaks before they start.

The measles outbreak earlier this year is a reminder to us all that diseases are still out there and are not a thing of the past.

The good news is we can take steps to protect ourselves and our family. Routine childhood vaccinations have made such an impact on public health that immunizations are considered one of the greatest medical achievements of the 20th century. Vaccines help prevent disease in people who receive them and protect those who come in contact with unvaccinated individuals.

Before vaccines, many children died from diseases such as polio or measles. With the introduction of routine vaccinations, many of these diseases have become rare in the U.S. However, the organisms that cause them still exist throughout the world. For those with compromised or weakened immune systems, these diseases can be very dangerous.

It's for this reason Wisconsin has new laws starting this fall for our school-aged children. The new vaccination laws include a requirement for a dose of Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis) vaccine for students entering grades 6, 9 and 12 and a second dose of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine for students entering kindergarten, 6th and 12th grade. These vaccines are important not only for protecting the health of your child, but for their siblings and others as well.

Immunizations help prevent dangerous illnesses and help prevent diseases from reemerging and spreading throughout our state. Please contact your health care provider or local public health department to get vaccinated today. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to keep track of each immunization visit, and to ask their health care provider about how to access their child's immunization records through the Wisconsin Immunization Registry.

And parents, don't forget to get caught up on immunizations yourself. It's an investment that protects you, your family and all of Wisconsin.

Karen Timberlake is the Secretary of the Department of Health Services. The Department protects and promotes the health and safety of the people of Wisconsin.