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Celebrating a Healthy Tomorrow through Immunizations

National Immunization Awareness Week (NIAW) is held annually in late April and is an opportunity to focus the attention of Canadians on the importance of vaccinations for all ages. This year, NIAW was April 22 to 29, 2017.

Immunizations protect against disease by introducing vaccines into the body and are especially important for young children. Keep your child(ren) and yourself safe. By getting vaccines at the recommended time, you and your child(ren) can be protected from many diseases over your lifetime. Immunization has saved more lives in the past 50 years than any other health measure.

Immunization doesn't just protect the people who get immunized, it protects those around them as well. It is important to protect people such as infants who are too young to be immunized, or people who are medically at risk and can't produce immunity. In adults, it helps to promote healthy aging.

Vaccines cause the immune system to produce antibodies and form memory cells which prevent re-infection. Vaccination is a lifelong process; breastfeeding is your child's first form of immunization. For immunization to be the most effective, children should have all immunizations done at the recommended time, starting at two months of age. Saskatchewan offers free routine, childhood and adult immunization, plus free immunization programs for people identified to be at high risk.

Vaccines recommended for children include:

- Diphtheria, tetanus, Pertussis (whooping cough), inactivated polio virus
- Measles, mumps and rubella (with or without varicella or chicken pox vaccine)
- Rotavirus
- Hepatitis B
- Pneumococcal and meningococcal

In Canada, vaccines are safety inspected, are developed to meet the highest standards and are continuously monitored and tested before being approved for use. Mild side effects such as redness at the injection site or fever may occur; serious adverse reactions to vaccines are very rare.

If you have any concerns about vaccines, it is important to talk to your health care provider or you can contact your local Public Health office to work with you to ensure that you and your family's vaccines are up to date.