FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Vaccines Key to Preventing Disease and Death

National Infant Immunization Week – April 24 - May 1, 2010

SPRINGFIELD – Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Damon T. Arnold is encouraging parents to talk with their health care provider during National Infant Immunization Week about ensuring their child is up-to-date on immunizations. Each year, thousands of children become ill from diseases that could have been prevented by basic childhood immunizations. Countless more miss time from day care and school because they are under-immunized or inappropriately immunized.

Vaccines are among the most cost-effective and successful public health tools for preventing disease and death. Because of the success of vaccines in preventing disease in the United States, parents are often unaware that their children are at risk for so many serious and life-threatening diseases.

“Although vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles and mumps are at an all time low in the United States, these diseases are still around and continued vaccination is a must,” said Dr. Arnold. “There are some children who cannot be vaccinated for either medical reasons or they are still too young, so it is important parents continue to have their children vaccinated to help protect their communities by preventing and reducing the spread of infectious diseases.”

National Immunization Survey data shows approximately 80 percent of children in Illinois receive the recommended series of vaccines by age two. The series includes:

• 4 DTaP – diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough)
• 3 Polio - poliovirus
• 1 MMR – measles, mumps and rubella
• 3 Hib – Haemophilus influenzae Type b
• 3 Hep B – hepatitis B

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• varicella – also known as chickenpox

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Immunizations are extremely safe. Vaccines are thoroughly tested before being approved for public use and monitored carefully by doctors, researchers, and public health officials.

Vaccines not only prevent disease, they reduce the costs associated with missed time from work, doctor visits, and hospitalizations.

Dr. Arnold is also reminding parents about the importance of making sure their children receive the H1N1 vaccine. Children under the age of 10 must receive two doses of the vaccine for full immunity. It’s not too late to vaccinate. There is ample supply of H1N1 vaccine in Illinois and the Illinois Department of Public Health encourages anyone who has not been vaccinated, to get their H1N1 flu shot.

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