

**SUFFOLK COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES**



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NEWS RELEASE

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Suffolk County to Parents: Protect Your Child from Measles, Whooping Cough, Mumps...

As the number of reported cases of measles continues to rise nationally, and as pertussis continues to circulate locally, Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone and Dr. James Tomarken, Commissioner of Health Services, remind parents to make sure that their children are up-to-date on immunizations.

“Vaccines are among the most successful and cost-effective public health tools available for preventing disease and death,” said County Executive Steve Bellone. “They not only help protect vaccinated individuals, but also help protect entire communities by reducing the spread of infectious diseases.

“Providing babies with the recommended immunizations by age two is the best way to protect them from potentially life-threatening diseases,” said Dr. James Tomarken, “Currently, the United States has the safest, most effective vaccine supply in its history, so there is every reason to obtain immunizations on time according to the recommended schedule.”

In observance National Infant Immunization Week (April 18 through April 25, 2015), Dr. Tomarken offers five important reasons why immunizations need to be a top priority for parents:

- 1. Immunizations can save children...** from 14 vaccine preventable diseases: diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, haemophilus influenza type B, varicella (chickenpox), pneumococcal disease, rotavirus and influenza.
- 2. Immunizations are safe and effective ...** and given to children only after a long and careful review by scientists, doctors, and healthcare professionals.
- 3. Immunization protects others ...** from getting preventable diseases. Babies who are too young to be fully immunized, immune-compromised individuals, pregnant women and older adults, are among those who are particularly vulnerable to disease. To help keep them safe, be sure that you and your children are fully immunized.

- 4. Immunization saves time and money.** Vaccine-preventable diseases can result in prolonged disabilities and can take a financial toll because of lost time at work, medical bills or long-term disability care. In contrast, immunization is a good investment and usually covered by insurance.
- 5. Immunization protects future generations.** Vaccines have reduced and, in some cases, eliminated many diseases that killed or severely disabled people just a few generations ago. If we continue vaccinating now, and vaccinating completely, parents in the future may be able to trust that it is possible some diseases of today will no longer be around to harm their children in the future.

Families are encouraged to check with their doctors to make sure every child's immunizations are up to date. Parents who have questions about immunization may call Suffolk County's Shots for Tots Hotline, 631-854-0222, Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Additional information and vaccination schedules may be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's web site at www.cdc.gov/vaccines.

Note: The Department of Health Services offers the MMR (measles/mumps/rubella) immunization to college students, as mandated by NYSDOH. Call the SCDHS Office of Public Health, 631-854-0333, Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. for dates, times and locations.

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