



COUNTY OF POLK
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Polk County Health Department News Release

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For Immediate Release
May 1, 2013

Polk County Health Department receives adult immunization grant

The Polk County Health Department has received a \$10,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Vaccine Program Office and JBS International, Inc. to increase vaccination rates among adults in Polk County, specifically the Tdap vaccination that protects against whooping cough (pertussis), diphtheria, and tetanus. Immunizations are proven and safe ways to avoid many contagious diseases, yet most Polk County adults are not up to date on their immunizations.

Rick Kozin, Polk County Health Department Director said, "by increasing adult vaccinations we will not only prevent more adults from getting sick but also protect the most vulnerable in our population, like the elderly and infants."

Whooping cough, or pertussis, is a disease that is of particular concern that can be impacted by increased adult vaccination rates. Whooping cough is a bacterial infection that can sicken infants, children, adolescents, and adults. While most teens and adults will recover after several weeks of severe coughing, pertussis can be deadly to infants, who most frequently get it from a parent or sibling. Up to 50% of babies who get pertussis have to be hospitalized and of those 1 or 2 will die.

Mr. Kozin said, "Babies cannot be immunized until they are 2 to 6 months old so this leaves a window when they can be exposed to whooping cough by parents or siblings, so vaccinating the entire family and caregivers of the baby is a very important way to protect them from pertussis."

In 2012, Polk County had 10 times more whooping cough cases than in 2011. The Tdap vaccination is a safe and effective way to reduce the spread of whooping cough. By vaccinating all adults and children who have contact with an infant, there is a far smaller chance that the infant will get pertussis.

Free pertussis vaccinations are available for people over the age of 11 at ELIM Christian Fellowship Church on Sunday, May 19 after the 8 and 10:30 am services. The public is welcome to attend this free vaccination clinic. Vaccinations are also available at the Polk County Health Department to people of all ages. Some may qualify for free vaccinations. Call 286-3798 for an appointment. To learn more visit polkcountyiowa.gov/health or follow us on Twitter and Facebook.