

## Overview

In 1994, National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW) was declared to focus local and national attention on the importance of proper immunization for infants and toddlers 24 months and younger. Since its inception, National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW) has served as a call to parents, caregivers, and healthcare providers to participate in activities and recognition events to increase the awareness of immunizing children before their second birthday.

NIIW scheduled for April 25-May 1, 2004, is a time to highlight our past achievements and focus our efforts on future endeavors to continue to raise immunization coverage levels. This year's theme is "Vaccination: An Act of Love. Love Them, Protect Them, Immunize Them." We celebrate with our partners the accomplishments that would not have occurred without successful collaboration.

This year, the CDC will partner with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the US-Mexico Border Health Commission in support of Vaccination Week in the Americas (VWA), April 24-30, to promote immunization in all countries of the Americas. The goal of VWA is to highlight the need for routine vaccinations and to promote access to health services. Additional information on VWA can be found at [www.paho.org](http://www.paho.org).

### **The goals of NIIW are to:**

- Highlight the importance and benefits of childhood immunizations, especially to parents.
- Educate parents and caregivers about the importance of vaccination in protecting their children from birth against twelve vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Focus attention on our immunization achievements and celebrate the accomplishments made possible through successful collaboration.
- Revitalize efforts to protect children against vaccine-preventable diseases and give them a healthy start to life.
- Encourage better communication between parents/caregivers and their health care provider.
- Remind parents and caregivers they need to make and keep needed immunization appointments.
- Provide parents/caregivers with the toll-free 800 numbers they can call to locate a facility that offers free immunizations (Vaccines for Children's program) for their infants if they do not have a health care provider.

## **The objectives for NIIW are to:**

- Work with state and local health departments and local coalitions to develop and implement a local communication strategy to increase awareness of the importance of immunization and improve local immunization coverage rates as measured by the National Immunization Survey.
- Create events that attract community and media to increase the number and visibility of national and local media stories on infant immunization.
- Provide a forum to pitch news stories, provide a media hook to interest local media in developing feature stories on the importance of childhood immunization, and create opportunities for local media interviews with immunization experts.
- Recognize local partners/volunteers for their year-round efforts in helping to raise childhood immunization coverage, with special emphasis on completing the vaccination series.
- Create opportunities for local organizations and agencies to work together as coalitions.

## **Key Messages for NIIW include:**

- Vaccines are among the most successful and cost-effective public health tools available for preventing disease and death. They not only help protect vaccinated individuals from developing potentially serious diseases, they also help protect entire communities by preventing and reducing the spread of infectious agents.
- Immunizations are one of the most important ways parents can protect their children against serious diseases.
- Each day, 11,000 babies are born in the United States who will need to be immunized against twelve diseases before age two.
- We can now protect children from more vaccine preventable diseases than ever before. Because we can prevent more diseases, parents are often not aware what it takes to fully immunize a child.
- Infants and young children are particularly vulnerable to infectious diseases; that is why it is critical that they are protected through immunization.
- Children who are not immunized increase the chance that others will get a vaccine preventable disease.
- Immunizations are extremely safe thanks to advancements in medical research and ongoing review by doctors, researchers, and public health officials.
- Children are far more likely to be harmed by serious infectious diseases than by immunization.

- Parents and caregivers need to take responsibility for their child's vaccinations. They are encouraged to become informed consumers and keep a record of each immunization visit.
- Immunization protects families and communities. Children who are not immunized increase the chance that others will get the disease.
- Over 500 communities throughout the United States--from New York City to San Diego, California are expected to participate in NIIW, April 25 - May 1, 2004.
- U.S. cities will join other communities throughout the Western Hemisphere--communities from Canada to the tip of South America and throughout the Caribbean--to participate in Vaccination Week in the Americas, April 24-30. This unprecedented event joins together over 35 countries in the Western Hemisphere, including the United States, to highlight the need for routine vaccinations and promote access to health services for infants and children.

Every individual and community, large and small, can take an active roll in the reduction and prevention of vaccine-preventable diseases and celebrate NIIW. Harness the power of your community by brining together local groups, organizations, businesses, hospitals, day care centers, churches, providers, political leaders and the media to plan local NIIW activities. Below are a few ways in which you and your community can participate in NIIW. Please review the section titled, "***Preparing for NIIW,***" for an extensive list of NIIW ideas, activities, and program planning tips.

## **Community**

- Plan a NIIW kick-off event with your local partners that include activities such as a news conference or an immunization fair that will encourage the participation of parents and attract media attention.
- Arrange for your mayor or governor to sign a NIIW proclamation.
- Organize an awards/appreciation luncheon or dinner to recognize community and business leaders who have demonstrated excellence in raising local immunization rates.
- Work with local churches, schools, social and civic organizations, and businesses to develop a healthy neighborhood plan that includes promoting timely immunizations.
- Organize a door-to-door educational campaign to raise awareness about the importance of timely immunization.
- Form a speaker's bureau consisting of local teachers, providers, political leaders, and clergy to give seminars and presentations on immunization.
- Work with the local health department to develop an immunization awareness council whose goal is to promote activities that increase immunization rates.
- Develop public service announcements to air on local television and radio stations.

- Solicit donations or in-kind gifts from local businesses to offset printing and distribution costs of immunization educational materials.
- Encourage your organization and your partner agencies to show their support for infant immunization. Disseminate valuable infant immunization information to the public by posting the official NIIW icon on your website and linking to the national NIIW information page. For details visit the website link icon area at <http://www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/niiw>.

## **Providers**

- Encourage local hospitals to conduct grand rounds focusing on infant and childhood immunization.
- Persuade hospitals and health maintenance organizations to promote immunization in prenatal classes and during prenatal visits.
- Provide after-hours and weekend immunization services to reduce wait times and eliminate access barriers.
- Implement an immunization reminder system.
- Create and maintain a patient-friendly environment and provide culturally appropriate immunization education materials.
- Hold in-service training seminars focusing on record-keeping, eliminating access barriers and reminder-recall systems for medical, health and social service agencies.

## **Parents and Caregivers**

- Keep an immunization record and update it on every doctor's visit.
- Encourage effective communication between parents and caregivers and their health providers.
- Write an article or editorial for the local newspaper.
- Work with local health departments, clinics, and hospitals to promote neighborhood clinics.
- Work with local media to sponsor an immunization awareness campaign.
- Distribute immunization material to social service agencies and other community agencies that serve children, such as foster homes, refugee centers, homeless shelters, day care programs, schools, churches, libraries, and hospitals. Encourage agencies to share this information with parents of children 24 months and younger through website postings, newsletters and bulletin boards.