



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **UP TO DATE ON IMMUNIZATIONS? CELEBRATE!** *Public Health Officials Celebrate Parents and Children Who Are Up to Date; Encourage Parents to Immunize Infants and Toddlers*

San Diego County public health officials are celebrating the County's near all-time high immunization coverage levels and encouraging parents to immunize infants and toddlers on time.

"Immunizations are one of the most important ways we can protect our children and our communities against serious diseases," said Jean Shepard, Director of the County's Health and Human Services Agency (HHS), at a celebration at the City Heights Wellness Center in support of National Infant Immunization Week (April 21-28) and Toddler Immunization Month, which takes place during the month of May.

The event was attended by parents and dozens of children, who also participated in a health fair with games and activities to teach them about immunizations, nutrition, exercise and fitness, hand washing, and various other topics.

"What better way to celebrate than to see happy and healthy children who are protected against serious diseases like measles and the whooping cough," added Shepard.

"Up-To-Date? Celebrate!" is the theme for this year's immunization awareness campaign, celebrating parents whose children have received all the recommended shots. The annual campaign is sponsored by HHS with full support from the Board of Supervisors, especially Supervisor Greg Cox.

Surveys indicate that vaccination coverage in San Diego County is at a near all-time high, with about 88 percent of local children 19-35 months of age up-to-date on getting four doses of DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis), three doses of polio, and one dose of MMR (mumps, measles, and rubella) vaccines.

While health officials have much to celebrate, they recognize there is still more work to be done and are encouraging parents to immunize infants and toddlers.

"Many more babies are being born in San Diego County every year. It is also important that we

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continue our efforts and get these new residents immunized on time,” said Dr. Wilma Wooten, Interim Public Health Officer. “I am urging parents to protect their children by starting their shots on time and staying on schedule. Parents should ask their doctor or clinic to check their child’s immunization record and make sure their baby is up-to-date. Immunizations prevent many diseases, disability, and in the worst of cases, death.”

It is strongly recommended that babies receive immunizations at birth, 2, 4, 6, and 12-15 months of age. But shots are not just for babies. Parents, older siblings, grandparents, and babysitters also need to be up to date.

“No child, adolescent, or adult should suffer from a vaccine-preventable disease. We encourage families to immunize kids on time,” said Adrienne Collins Yancey, Chief of HHSA’s Immunization Branch.

While parents are the key to getting children immunized on time, the success of the County’s immunization efforts is also the result of the hard work and strong collaboration between the many partners of the Immunization Initiative, whose members are recognized as innovators in their field. Their excellent work has earned them recognition from state and national health officials.

“We are proud of our role in helping to protect our clients from serious childhood diseases. We enjoy working with the Immunization Initiative coalition to promote and maintain high immunization rates in our community,” said Carole McCrary, Program Manager for the Scripps Mercy Hospital WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) Program. The WIC program staff assesses immunization records of their clients’ children and refers them for any needed shots. “Scripps Mercy Hospital WIC Program and the City Heights Wellness Center are proud of our role in helping to protect our clients from serious childhood diseases,” added McCrary.

Immunizations are among the most successful and cost-effective things parents can do to protect their children from serious disease. High immunization coverage levels translate into fewer vaccine-preventable diseases experienced in a community.

For more information on immunizations and the diseases they prevent, parents should contact their health care provider or go to [www.sdiz.org](http://www.sdiz.org). To check a child’s immunization record with a nurse or get a referral to sources of free or low cost baby shots, parents can call the Baby Shots Line at (888) 692-2575 weekdays during business hours.

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