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CONTACT: TED KRAFCZYK, PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
MONONGALIA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
TELEPHONE: 304-319-3775   TED.L.KRAFCZYK@WV.GOV

NATIONAL INFANT IMMUNIZATION WEEK, APRIL 16-23, 2016
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National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW) is celebrated April 16-23 as part of the World Immunization Week. NIIW is an annual observance to promote the benefits of immunizations and to improve the health of children two years old or younger. Since 1994, local and state health departments, national immunization partners, healthcare professionals, community leaders from across the United States, and CDC have worked together to highlight the positive impact of vaccinations on the lives of infants and children. This year NIIW will promote immunization, equality in the treatment and use of vaccines and universal access to vaccinations and aid cooperation on immunization activities across borders.

This week also highlights important milestones that have been reached in managing vaccine preventable diseases among infants. Infants and children are now protected, by immunizations, from fourteen vaccine-preventable diseases before age two. Diseases that could have been deadly in the past are now manageable. In the 1950s, many children developed measles and some of those children unfortunately died. Today, most physicians will not see a case of measles during their time practicing. Although some diseases, like measles, seem to be a disease of the past, it is important for infants and children to be vaccinated because these diseases still exist. Children in the United States can—and do—still get some of these diseases.

Keeli Kovach, LPN with the Monongalia County WIC-ICE (Immunization Coordination Effort) program said, “A parent’s decision to delay vaccines may occur for different reasons. Often times the choice is made because of misinformation and fear. As parents and grandparents, we all want to do what is best for the child and cause no harm. However, the fact is, by delaying vaccination, a child is placed at unnecessary risk, with no benefit.”

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, but also help protect entire communities by preventing and reducing the spread of infectious diseases. Among children born during 1994-2013, vaccination will prevent an estimated 322 million illnesses, 21 million hospitalizations, and 732,000 deaths over the course of their lifetimes.

The WIC Immunization Program offers vaccines at no cost to eligible infants and children in Harrison, Marion, Monongalia, Preston, and Taylor Counties. WIC-ICE is a Vaccine for Children Provider and is the only WIC program of its kind in the State of West Virginia. Information and appointments are available by calling the local WIC office, 304-598- or 800-675-5181.

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