

# NEWS RELEASE



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## **National Infant Immunization Week (April 24-May 1) spotlights the need for all Oregon children to be properly immunized**

Immunization is the safest, most effective method of controlling and eradicating many diseases including polio, measles, rubella, diphtheria and tetanus. Each year in Oregon, more than 48,000 babies are born who should be immunized against 14 diseases before age 2. Yet in our state, 5 percent of kindergartners have an exemption for one or more vaccines, a rate that has steadily increased over the past decade.

"Immunization works because of the choices parents make to protect their children and the children of others," says Jay Rosenbloom, M.D., a private practitioner of pediatrics and the Oregon Pediatric Society's representative to the Oregon Partnership to Immunize Children (OPIC). "As long as we keep vaccinating, children will no longer experience terrible diseases like polio and measles."

The Oregon Immunization Program (OIP) promotes statewide immunizations for children through OPIC, a coalition that facilitates the collaboration of public and private partners to protect Oregon's children and adolescents against vaccine-preventable diseases. The Vaccines for Children Program (VFC) supplies federally purchased vaccines to immunize eligible children in public and private practices -- at no cost to participating health care providers or to the patients. The Oregon Adult Immunization Coalition (OAIC) plays a key role in promoting immunizations for adults and elders to prevent diseases like whooping cough and influenza from passing to infants too young to be fully vaccinated.

"Immunizations are important throughout life, but especially for infants, who are particularly vulnerable to life-threatening infectious diseases," says Dr. Rosenbloom. "Children who are not immunized against whooping cough are 23 times more likely to contract the disease, which over the past several years has killed five babies in Oregon."

(more)

Governor Kulongoski has proclaimed April 24 - May 1 National Infant Immunization Week in Oregon. The Oregon Immunization Program has launched Facebook and Twitter pages to encourage parents to have their children immunized. This summer, OIP will introduce ALERT IIS, a revamped and improved statewide vaccine registry to help parents and health care providers keep even more accurate immunization records.

“Immunization is a shared responsibility,” says Dr. Rosenbloom. “Families, health care providers and public health officials must work together to help protect the entire community and to eliminate as many of these life-threatening diseases as possible”

For more information, visit [OIP's website](#), or [Oregon Immunization Program on Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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