



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
LANSING

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MDCH, MOA, and MSMS Urge Residents to Protect Infants from Pertussis and Flu

LANSING – The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH), along with the Michigan Osteopathic Association (MOA) and Michigan State Medical Society (MSMS), are urging all Michigan residents to get vaccinated against pertussis, also known as whooping cough, and influenza to protect themselves and vulnerable infants.

“Most parents today have never seen the devastating consequences that vaccine-preventable diseases can have on a family or community,” said James K. Haveman, Director of the MDCH. “Through vaccination, Michigan families are much better protected than they were in the past but vaccine-preventable diseases are still a very real threat and they continue to exist in the communities in which we live, work, and play.”

On May 17, Veronica McNally, mother of Francesca Marie, “Franny”, lost her 3-month-old daughter to pertussis, also known as whooping cough. Both Veronica and her son had pertussis disease which went unrecognized by numerous health care providers. McNally was not advised of the importance of receiving a tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine for herself and those around Franny to cocoon her daughter against this serious disease. Additionally, her two older children were on a delayed immunization schedule.

“In deciding to delay my children’s vaccination schedule, I thought I was doing what was in their best interest,” McNally said. “I thought I was informed. I thought my vigilance in seeing a doctor when my children were sick was going to help protect them. I thought I was on top of my children’s health. But I was naive.”

Whooping cough is one of the most commonly occurring vaccine-preventable diseases in the U.S. and cases are on the rise. In Michigan, there has been a steady increase in pertussis throughout the past decade, with a peak of more than 1,500 reported cases in 2010. This year in Michigan, there already have been 597 reported pertussis cases as of Sept. 30.

Influenza is also a life-threatening disease especially for infants. During the 2010-11 flu season, there were six influenza-associated pediatric deaths in our state. Currently, flu activity nationwide is beginning to increase. Michigan already has seen 12 cases.

“Since health care personnel are the first line of defense in diagnosing, treating, and preventing the spread of these infectious diseases, it makes sense that we lead by example to protect not only our patients, but the entire health care workforce,” stated Michigan State Medical Society President-elect Kenneth Elmassian, D.O. “Whether we commit to it as individual providers, or as health care institutions, we must take all appropriate measures to prevent the spread of infectious diseases in health care settings. This certainly includes vaccinating ourselves against seasonal and pandemic flu and pertussis.”

In Michigan, vaccination rates among adults are very low with almost 17 percent of adults ages 19-64 and only 66 percent of Michigan adolescents ages 11-12 having received the Tdap vaccine. Studies have shown that immunity to pertussis wanes after the childhood series has been given, therefore it’s critical to vaccinate adolescents and adults to further boost their pertussis protection. Vaccination rates are also low for the flu vaccine, with only 31 percent of Michigan adults ages 18-64 vaccinated against the flu during the 2011-12 season.

“Today’s vaccines are created using modern technology, and involve many scientific disciplines. Our patients and their families should feel confident that the ‘how to’, and ‘wherefores’ of vaccine administration is greatly understood today,” said Anthony Ognjan, D.O. FACP and member physician with the MOA. “The techniques involved for safe and effective vaccination delivery have been simplified for the average physician, specialty physicians and other health care providers, by diverse groups of scientists, physicians and clinical practitioners.”

MDCH, MOA, and MSMS are urging Michigan families to talk to their health care provider today about the vaccines they need for themselves and their family. Further, Michigan health care providers are encouraged to never miss an opportunity to vaccinate and to strongly recommend vaccines to patients of all ages. Even if you don’t have a baby in your family or social circle, these diseases can be passed on anywhere that air is shared. Infants depend on all of us to be vaccinated to protect them.

“To all expectant mothers, I urge you: please ask your doctor about vaccination against pertussis and flu for you and all members of your family,” said McNally. “Protect your infants.”

For more information about vaccinations in Michigan, including pertussis and flu, visit www.michigan.gov/immunize and www.michigan.gov/flu. To read more about Franny’s story, visit www.frannystrong.org.

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