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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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OCEAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT REMINDS RESIDENTS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF IMMUNIZATIONS

Daniel E. Regenye, Ocean County Health Department (OCHD) Public Health Coordinator, said, "The most effective way to reduce and eliminate the incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases is to have you and your family vaccinated according to the recommended immunization schedule approved by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

New Jersey has seen a slight increase in cases of pertussis (whooping cough) from what they would normally expect to see while Ocean County is not experiencing an increase in cases. Jennifer Crawford, OCHD Supervisor of Communicable Disease, said, "We expect to see sporadic cases of pertussis in Ocean County. Recently, there were 2 confirmed cases of pertussis in infants in Ocean County; neither had been vaccinated against pertussis. The two cases do not appear to be linked and we are not currently experiencing an outbreak."

Regenye pointed out how many of our vaccine preventable childhood illnesses have been virtually eliminated by vaccinations. He added, "As parents, we want our children to have the best of everything, including health. By vaccinating our children we are protecting them from diseases that were once dangerous and life-threatening."

Different healthcare providers throughout Ocean County have been receiving calls from residents asking how they can protect themselves and their family from pertussis. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention offers the following guidelines through the ACIP recommended schedule regarding a booster vaccination:

- All adults, including those over the age of 65, should receive a Td (tetanus/diphtheria) booster every 10 years.
- Adults under the age of 65, who have never received a Tdap, should receive this for their next booster dose.
- All adults, including those over the age of 65, who have or who anticipate having close contact with an infant less than 12 months of age and who have not received the Tdap booster vaccine, should receive a single dose of Tdap to protect against pertussis and reduce the likelihood of transmission.
- Adults over the age of 65 may also receive one dose of Tdap instead of Td if they have not previously received this vaccine.
- Any adult who wants to be protected from pertussis should receive this booster.
- New mothers who have never received a Tdap vaccine should get a dose as soon as possible **after** delivery.

Leslie Terjesen, OCHD Public Information Officer, said that recommended **Immunization Schedules** can be found by visiting the Ocean County Health Department website at www.ochd.org, under **SERVICES/TOPICS**.

In addition to having your child vaccinated according to the recommended schedule, it is important for everyone to have an annual flu shot. Children under the age of 60 months in a certified pre-school, nursery school, or certified babysitter must have their seasonal flu shot. The Ocean County Health Department is offering flu clinics every Thursday night through the month of February, from 3 – 6pm at the Health Department main office at 175 Sunset Avenue, Toms River. If you have any questions about the flu shot program, please call 732-341-9700, ext. 7502.

The Ocean County Health Department also continues to stress the importance of handwashing, covering coughs and sneezes and staying home when sick. Handwashing is the single most important prevention method to avoid the spread of disease.

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