

Wednesday, September 17, 2008

ADULT IMMUNIZATION AWARENESS WEEK, 9/21-27/08

Indianapolis -- Governor Daniels has declared September 21-27 as Adult Immunization Awareness Week according to Roland Grieb, M.D., chair of the Indiana Adult Immunization Coalition.

In his proclamation, the Governor called for Hoosiers to increase their knowledge, acceptance and use of vaccines to protect adolescents and adults against serious, life-threatening disease.

“Each year tens of thousands of adolescents and adults die from vaccine-preventable diseases of their complications across the U.S.,” Grieb said. He continued that the deaths are spread among all ages, cultures, races, ethnic and societal groups.

“Safe and effective vaccines are readily available to protect against disease, disability and death from communicable disease,” Grieb said. He explained that communicable diseases are those diseases that are transmitted from one person to another directly by contact with any bodily discharge or indirectly from contaminated objects like door handles or telephone handsets.

Communicable diseases are those that are caused by bacteria, fungi, parasites and viruses.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that older adults get the following vaccines:

Influenza (flu) vaccine

Adults should get the flu vaccine every year to avoid getting the flu and spreading it to loved ones. Every year in the U.S., an average of 36,000 people die from the flu. Most of these deaths are among adults 65 years old and older.

Pneumococcal vaccine

One shot reduces the risk of pneumococcal disease. Pneumococcal disease can cause serious infections of the lungs (pneumonia), the bloodstream (bacteremia), and the covering of the brain (meningitis). Pneumococcal disease is one of the most common causes of vaccine-preventable death in the U.S. and is particularly dangerous for older adults.

Shingles vaccine

One shot reduces the risk of shingles and long-term pain after shingles in adults 60 years old and older. Shingles is a disease that causes a painful, blistering rash. One in five people with shingles will have severe, long-term pain after the rash heals. Shingles is more common and more serious in older adults. Nearly 1 million Americans get shingles every year and about half of them are 60 years old and older. Shingles shares the same virus as chickenpox.

The Indiana Adult Immunization Coalition is a voluntary group of health and older adult focused organizations dedicated to eradicating vaccine preventable deaths and disease among adults. The Coalition promotes education and outreach activities to increase awareness of and participation in adult immunizations.