

April 24-30 is World Immunization Week



Michelle Miller

MY VIEW

Immunizations, or vaccines, are the safest, most effective way to protect you and your child from certain infectious diseases. They work by helping your body develop antibodies against specific diseases, so you are better able to fight off these infections when exposed.

Most vaccines cause only minor side effects including fever, local redness and lymph node enlargement, symptoms that are far less serious than the disease itself. True contraindications are rare but include Guillain-Barre and high fevers.

Most schools require each student to follow the immunization schedules recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Examples of vaccines recommended for children include flu, polio, pneumonia, hepatitis, meningitis and HPV, along with the combined measles, mumps and rubella vaccine.

The CDC provides schedules for children from birth through age 18, as well as for those who missed immunizations during their early childhood. These schedules are reviewed and updated each year and can be found on Capital Health Plan's Healthwise Knowledgebase website.

Immunizations can protect your child from dangerous diseases, while also helping to reduce the spread of diseases to others around you — especially those with compromised immune symptoms like the elderly and cancer patients. While a vaccine cannot completely guarantee a person won't get sick, it will make the impact of the disease much less severe if it is



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contracted. The cost of an immunization is significantly lower than treating the disease.

It's not just kids — adults should also stay up to date with their vaccinations, as most vaccines require booster shots to stay active. The vaccines you need as an adult depend not only on your age, lifestyle, overall health, pregnancy status and travel plans, but also whom you are in close contact with and what vaccines you had as a child. Travel vaccine recommendations can be found on CDC.gov/travel. Vaccines often recommended for adults include flu, shingles and tetanus.

Vaccines save lives every day. In an effort to educate people about the

preventive power of vaccines, April 24-30 has been designated as World Immunization Week. During the 2016-17 influenza season, there have been 20 child fatalities in the United States. In Florida, there have been 185 deaths due to influenza and pneumonia across all ages.

This week, take the first step by checking out our Healthwise Knowledgebase at CapitalHealth.com, where you can find printable immunization schedules, in-depth articles, videos and interactive tools. Call your doctor to schedule any needed vaccines for your family to help them stay healthy.

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