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Immunizations Save Billions of Dollars Each Year

An article in an issue late last year of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) *Immunization Works* newsletter focused on a study of the economic impact of routine childhood immunizations. The study, by the CDC's National Immunization Program (NIP), evaluated the impact of seven vaccines routinely given as part of the childhood immunization schedule. These included DTaP, Td, Hib, polio, MMW, hepatitis B, and varicella vaccines. Results indicated that vaccines are extremely cost effective. This is the first time the seven vaccines were examined together and with a common method.

The study found that the use of these seven vaccines will prevent over 14 million cases of disease and over 33,500 deaths over the lifetime of children born this year. Comparing the cost of the prevented diseases with the cost of administering the vaccines indicates a savings of close to \$10 billion nationally per year. Additionally, vaccines prevent the need for patients to spend time seeking care and the need for parents to take time off work to care for sick children. When adding these and other prevented costs to society, the annual savings is more than \$40 billion.

Children are protected from vaccine-preventable diseases after receiving a series of vaccines over time, not just one shot. This study of cost effectiveness is groundbreaking because earlier studies examining cost savings from immunizations in the U.S. focused only on individual vaccines. This new information provides policymakers better information on the economic impact of the immunization program.

Immunizations are one of the most significant achievements in public health of the 20th century, according to the CDC. Immunizing children at the recommended times allows their immune systems to have a chance to develop protective antibodies that help fight against disease and illness. Children who are not immunized are at risk of being exposed to germs too strong for them to fight. If large groups of children go without vaccines, it leaves them unprotected and disease outbreaks can happen.

Immunizations are one of the many services available to residents of Lee County through your local health department. For additional information or to schedule an appointment, please call 284-3371. Immunizations are a cost effective public health measure and public health is an investment in your community.

-Submitted by Cathy Ferguson, MPH, Public Health Administrator