

For Immediate Release
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More than 19% of Parents/Guardians in the Coachella Valley are Concerned About the Potential Risks of Child Vaccinations

*The last week of April, April 24th to April 30th, is recognized as World Immunization Week. This week is utilized to promote the use of vaccinations as they save millions of lives every year. Vaccines help bring immunity to humans before they come into contact with diseases. The current global pandemic, COVID-19, has demonstrated the huge need for vaccinations that protect us against dangerous and deadly diseases. **In this Press Release, we provide Coachella Valley level statistics, health needs, guidelines to ensure community immunization, and information on COVID-19***

Palm Desert, CA (24 April 2020) —Most vaccinations are given at a young age of zero to ten-years-old. Thus, in order to receive vaccinations, the parent or guardian must first consent to giving their child the recommended vaccinations. In the Coachella Valley, the majority of parents or guardians (63.9%) are “not at all concerned” with the potential risks associated with child vaccinations. However, 10.2% of the population feels concerned about potential risks and 9.0% of the population feels “very concerned”. Together, about **19.2% or 16,726 people in the Coachella Valley express concern for their child receiving vaccines.**

In deciding whether to vaccinate a child or not, it is important to consider the benefits received from vaccines, as well as the reasoning for concerns. Most vaccines given at a young age can protect children against diseases such as measles, polio, chickenpox, the flu, hepatitis A and B, among others. Vaccines do not only ensure protection from disease but also strengthen a baby’s immune system.

One of the common concerns with vaccinations is the theory that vaccination programs may be linked to Autism. Autism spectrum disorder is a developmental disorder that affects communication and behavior. This disorder typically appears within the first two years of a child’s life, which is often around the same time that a child receives most of their vaccines. However, several research studies from the Institute of Medicine and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that vaccines do not cause autism.

Coachella Valley Health Needs

It is also important to consider the possible barriers to ensuring immunization in the community. In 2016, 24.3% of parents/guardians in the Coachella Valley with children of ages zero to five, expressed that they “need help using immunization services”. Fortunately, this percent has dropped significantly to 5.9% in 2019. However, this 5.9% of Coachella Valley residents account for 1,869 children in the ages zero to five who have parents/guardians that need help using immunization services in the community.

Guidelines to Ensure Community Immunization

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, babies should receive the first shot of hepatitis B vaccine within their first 12 hours after being born. Between one to two months of age, the child should have received the second dose of hepatitis B, the first dose of DTaP, the first dose of Hib, the first dose of polio, the first dose of PCV13, and the first dose of RV. A full schedule of the rest of the vaccines along with the recommended timeframe for the vaccination is available on the CDC webpage. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also encourages parents/guardians to talk to the child’s doctor or nurse about the vaccines recommended for their age.

However, not all vaccinations are given when the child is so young. Another common vaccination is the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine which protects from a virus that can lead to at least six types of cancer. CDC recommends for this vaccination to be given as early as 9-10 years old. Someone could be exposed to HPV via sexual activity; thus, the goal is to provide children with the vaccine early before exposure to HPV. In the Coachella Valley, more than half of the children aged nine to 17 (53.9%) have received the HPV vaccine. Yet, **46.1% of children aged nine to 17 have not had the HPV vaccine.**

Ultimately, it is up to the parents/guardians to decide what is best for their child. Online resources such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provide parents/guardians with detailed information along with answers to common questions regarding vaccinations. In addition, it is recommended to talk to the child’s doctor and nurse for more information specific to each child.

COVID-19

The coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, is a respiratory disease outbreak that has been found in more than 100 countries. The global pandemic has illustrated the importance of preventive measures to limit the spread of new viruses. Preventive measures, such as social distancing, face coverings, and staying home are very important in limiting the spread of COVID-19 because a vaccination program is not yet available. However, the lack of willingness to act accordingly until a vaccination is available may prove to be a major issue.

According to data from Riverside University Health System – Public Health, there are over 3,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus and 99 related deaths in Riverside County. Of those county-level cases, 537 confirmed cases and 23 related deaths are within the Coachella Valley. It is during this difficult time that we must remember although there is

not a vaccine available for the coronavirus, there are many vaccination programs available to reduce other illnesses. We urge you to consider the benefits of vaccinations during World Immunization Week, especially under the current circumstances we are experiencing.

To see more statistics regarding health information in the Coachella Valley, please visit: <https://www.HARCdata.org>

For more information about COVID-19, please visit:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
<https://www.rivcoph.org/coronavirus>

To schedule an interview with Dr. Jenna LeComte-Hinely call 760.404.1945 or email Jlecomte-hinely@HARCdata.org.

About HARC

HARC, Inc. (Health Assessment and Research for Communities) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing research and evaluation services related to health and wellness. HARC is funded in part by grants, donations, and the consulting services they offer. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at 760.404.1945, or visiting the organization's website at www.HARCdata.org

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