

Vaccines Still Keep Kids Safe

Most of us haven't ever seen or maybe even known someone who had polio. But I did see someone struggling with polio the other night on a television show—I've been watching a health-related drama series on television, based on the memoir of a nurse in the East End of London during the 1950's. It is an enjoyable show, and, being a nurse, I enjoy the health drama and get a kick out of trying to diagnose the problems before they reveal them in the show. I can't vouch for its authenticity exactly, but based on my limited knowledge, it seems to be right on target with the chronological depiction of the health issues and practices of the time, and the development of healthcare practices and technologies. While it is dramatic and fun to watch, it has also been educational and a great reminder of the importance of public health interventions, especially that of vaccines. In one episode we watch as they deal with an outbreak of polio, and we are able to see how it affected the lives of several children. Some recover, and some are permanently changed. It was during this time period that the polio vaccine was created and introduced and so we also get to see the drama of attempted mass vaccinations in less-than-ideal circumstances. In another episode they struggle with diphtheria. Measles also crops up, and with the overcrowding and poor living conditions of this area of London, all of these diseases were significant health threats and had big impacts. The doctor is often heard to say that he wishes the vaccine would be developed more quickly. I've been impressed with the real, personal and often devastating effects that these diseases had.

Today, when a lot of these diseases aren't quite so common, it is easy to forget the health toll they took, and to discount the positive impact on overall population health that vaccines have had. The diseases we can now prevent were serious and dangerous, and costly for the healthcare system.

Immunizations continue to be a major part of Public Health's efforts to both prevent disease and protect community health, and according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, "getting all of the vaccines recommended by CDC's immunization schedule is one of the most important things parents can do to protect their children from serious diseases."

With that, Uinta County Public Health reminds parents to protect their children's health and prepare them to return to school by keeping them up to date on their vaccinations. Children entering pre-school, kindergarten, and seventh grade are *required* to be up to date on their vaccinations.

School requirements aside, keeping current on vaccinations is a way to prevent those serious and possibly fatal diseases. It not only protects the health of the individual but that of the community.

When children are not vaccinated, they are at increased risk for diseases and can also spread diseases to others in their classrooms and community—including babies who are too young to be fully vaccinated, and people with weakened immune systems due to cancer or other health conditions.

Parents of children needing school vaccinations are urged to make appointments as soon as possible to ensure vaccinations prior to the start of school.

Parents may call Uinta County Public Health to make an appointment for vaccinations or for questions at offices in Evanston @ 789-9203 or Lyman @ 787-3800. Appointments fill quickly.