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**Aug. 7, 2017**

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## **Oklahoma HMO discusses importance of immunizations**

*Immunizations avoid 2 to 3 million deaths each year and eliminate diseases*

**OKLAHOMA** – Each year, immunizations avoid an estimated 2 to 3 million deaths, according to the World Health Organization. Additionally, vaccines in children have played a role in helping eliminate diseases such as smallpox and polio in the United States. With the school year approaching, GlobalHealth, an Oklahoma-based health maintenance organization (HMO), is encouraging parents to check with their child’s primary care physician to ensure they are up-to-date on all vaccines.

“As children are preparing to go back to school, this is a great opportunity for Oklahoma parents to schedule wellness exams for you and your children to discuss options of staying healthy, including getting all necessary vaccines,” said Dr. Wesley Williams, medical director at GlobalHealth. “Immunizations offer you and your family protection against dangerous and sometimes deadly diseases.”

This August, GlobalHealth is offering the following tips for Oklahoma parents to prepare their child for immunization checkups:

**Know the schedule.** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), babies should start their vaccination schedule right away with the hepatitis B vaccine given within 24 hours of birth. During your first visit, your primary care physician will discuss the recommended schedule for your child to receive vaccines, including an immunization record that outlines at what age your child should receive each vaccine. Showing records of completed annual immunizations may be needed for admission to school, daycare and extracurricular activities.

**Look ahead.** As children grow, there are vaccines recommended as they reach pre-teen and teenage years. Children over the age of 11 are 20 percent less likely to receive well-child visits than children under the age of 4. It is important to ensure your child is vaccinated into their teenage years for continued wellness. Your primary care physician will also have recommendations for college-age children. Using the schedule provided by your primary care physician, you can see what immunizations are recommended for the next year. This allows you

to research potential side effects of an immunization and understand the benefits of the vaccination.

**Talk to your primary care physician.** The schedule of vaccinations can be complicated as more vaccines are combining protection against multiple diseases. For example, the popular vaccine Pediarix combines the diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B and polio vaccines. Because of this combination, parents should review their child's immunization records and research the vaccinations their child receives. Additionally, after your child receives a vaccination, parents should ask physicians about the potential side effects. According to the CDC, side effects for vaccinations are usually mild and can include swelling or mild pain at the injection site.

“Talk with your primary care physician to help keep you and your family healthy and free of dangerous diseases,” Williams said. “Receiving all scheduled vaccines helps to ensure your family is protected as well as those in the community who are too young to receive certain vaccinations or those with decreased immunity secondary to age or other health conditions.”

### **About GlobalHealth**

GlobalHealth is changing health insurance in Oklahoma. As an industry leader, GlobalHealth is an Oklahoma-based health maintenance organization covering more than 44,000 individuals in all 77 Oklahoma counties. Working proactively with each member, GlobalHealth engages a personalized management plan to address their specific needs and ensure the best possible health outcomes. GlobalHealth utilizes cutting edge, predictive data technology as a foundation to deliver improved healthcare as part of its commitment to making health insurance more affordable. Its membership includes state and education employees, federal employees, municipal employees, Medicare Advantage members and private employers. GlobalHealth employs more than 250 associates throughout Oklahoma. To learn more, visit [www.GlobalHealth.com](http://www.GlobalHealth.com).

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