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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Serious Childhood Illnesses Continue to Circulate:**  
*National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW) Highlights Importance of Vaccination*

*Brewster, NY*—Vaccination saves the lives of millions of children. Described as one of the top ten achievements in 20<sup>th</sup> Century public health, routine infant immunization offers proven protection from 14 vaccine-preventable diseases. These potentially life-threatening illnesses have yet to be eradicated and are the focus of this year's National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW), April 23-30, which highlights the continued importance of protecting all infants and children before age two.

Pertussis (whooping cough), diphtheria, measles, and other vaccine-preventable diseases persist in circulating in the United States and around the world. Putnam County recorded 19 cases of whooping cough in 2008 and last year an epidemic in California resulted in 10 infant deaths and more than 20,000 cases nationally. Diphtheria, once a major cause of death and illness among children, resulted in 15,520 deaths in 1921. No cases were recorded in the U.S between 2004 and 2008, but the disease circulates globally.

Similarly measles has resulted in countless fatalities in the U.S. Approximately 12,000 deaths occurred here in 1916, and 75 percent were children younger than five years old. The incidence of measles dropped dramatically after the Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) vaccine was licensed in 1981. Eradication looked possible, but outbreaks still continue—more than 120 Americans died from measles from 1989 to 1991.

The Putnam County Department of Health offers routine infant immunizations as well as those for adults. To schedule an appointment at a clinic, or for further information, call the Putnam County Department of Health at 845-808-1332.