



Department of Health  
Agency of Human Services



## Too Young to be Vaccinated, Baby Oliver Gets Pertussis

*National Infant immunization Week — April 23-30*

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BURLINGTON – Three-week old Oliver Crainich seemed to just have a bad cold when he boarded a trans-Atlantic flight with his family last December. His parents, Janet and Paul, traveled to Ireland with their four young children to spend time with relatives and celebrate the holidays.

The baby seemed fine for most of the trip, but when it was time to return home to Burlington, he developed a cough. On the plane ride home Janet noticed that he didn't look right – he was having coughing fits that left him unable to breathe. The plane landed in Boston where an ambulance was waiting to take Oliver to the hospital. He was admitted to the intensive care unit, and the doctors suspected whooping cough (pertussis), although they had not seen a case for a long time. After three days the test came back positive for pertussis, and Oliver spent the next two weeks in the hospital.

Vaccine-preventable infectious diseases are making headlines as parents debate the safety of these immunizations, and some choose not to immunize their children. Immunization rates in the U.S. have dropped in the past three years, and that has resulted in outbreaks of diseases such as pertussis in California, measles in Minnesota and mumps in New Jersey. These outbreaks especially affect infants who, like Oliver, are too young to be immunized, or people with rare medical conditions that make them ineligible for immunization.

Ever since an infamous 1998 study incorrectly linked vaccines with autism, parents have been understandably fearful. Vaccine safety has been carefully studied for decades, and data supports both the individual and community-wide benefits of vaccines.

It is true that more American children are being diagnosed with autism, and scientists don't know why. According to Dr. Paul Offit, director of vaccine education at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, the 1998 study has been repeated 14 times around the globe by different researchers, and the results are consistent – vaccines don't cause autism. Experts are trying to figure out what is, in fact, causing autism. It's time to let go of the myth that vaccines are the culprit.

In 2010, more than 21,000 people were diagnosed with whooping cough, one of the highest rates of infection in over 50 years. Paul Crainich, baby Oliver's father, always understood the value of vaccines, and encourages parents to stick with the vaccination schedule recommended for kids since it is based on years of scientific research and reliable data. When a big chunk of the population (90 to 95%) is immunized against a disease it creates "community immunity," which stops the spread of infectious diseases and protects those who are too young or ill to be vaccinated.

During National Infant Immunization Week (April 23-29), the Vermont Department of Health is launching a statewide effort to provide Vermonters with facts about the safety of immunizations, and to protect children from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Look for more information on our website [healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov) our new Facebook page '[Healthy Vermont Families](#)', follow us on [Twitter](#), or call our immunization program toll-free at 1-800-640-4374.

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