



Springfield-Greene County
Health Department
Helping people live longer, healthier, happier lives

Routine Vaccinations Needed for Adolescents

by Leslie Davis, RN

Vaccinations are not just for babies and small children. The protection provided by some early childhood vaccinations can wear off as children grow older. Children approaching their teen years generally develop risks for more diseases and need the protection offered by vaccinations.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) currently recommends children 11 – 12 years old get three vaccinations – Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis), meningococcal vaccine, and the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine (for girls).

A dose of the Tdap vaccine is recommended for adolescents who received the DTaP or DTP as children, but have not yet received the Td booster. Adolescents who received the Td booster should also receive a Tdap booster for protection against pertussis (whooping cough). The health department recommends children get the Td and Tdap shots at least five years apart.

The meningococcal vaccination is recommended for kids age 11 – 18. One dose is normally given at age 11 – 12. Adolescents that did not receive a dose at age 11 – 12 should receive the vaccination at the first opportunity.

Parents of girls 9 and older should consider getting them vaccinated against Human Papillomavirus with a series of three shots given over a six-month period. The HPV vaccine protects against four major types of HPV that cause about 70% of cervical cancers and two types of HPV that cause about 90% of genital warts.

Adolescents 11 – 18 should be vaccinated against Hepatitis A, if they haven't been before. Two doses of the vaccine are given at least 6 months apart, and offer protection against this serious liver disease.

Kids 11 – 18 should also receive two doses of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine if they didn't have the disease as a child. If they had only one dose of varicella vaccine as a child, they should get a second dose during their adolescent years.

They should also get three doses of Hepatitis B vaccine and two doses of measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine if they've not yet completed these vaccinations.

Adolescents up through age 18 should get a seasonal flu shot each year to protect them against influenza viruses.

Getting immunized is a life- long process. Parents are encouraged to protect their adolescents by ensuring they are up-to-date on all recommended vaccinations. Help them live a longer, happier, healthier life. ■