

Press Release

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Contact:
CDC Division of Media Relations
Phone: (404)639-3286

CDC Urges Parents to Protect Preteens with Three Recommended Vaccines

New CDC campaign launched during National Immunization Awareness Month encourages a routine health checkup for 11-and 12-year-olds

As children approach their teen years, parents often worry about how to protect them from new risks and potential dangers. Experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) today launched a campaign to educate parents about one of the things they can do to protect their children at 11 and 12 years of age and for years to come: make sure they are vaccinated against serious, sometimes life-threatening diseases such as meningitis, tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough, and cervical cancer.

The CDC's Preteen Vaccine campaign is designed to inform parents, caregivers, family physicians and pediatricians about CDC's new vaccination recommendations for 11- and 12-year-olds. The three preteen vaccines include MCV4, which protects against meningitis and its complications; Tdap, which is a booster against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis or "whooping cough," and for girls, the human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine, which protects against the most common types of cervical cancer.

The campaign's launch coincides with National Immunization Awareness Month in August.

A new Web site, www.cdc.gov/vaccines/preteen/, provides easy-to-understand, downloadable educational materials in English and Spanish for parents and health care providers about the vaccines and the diseases they prevent.

"Many parents do not realize that some childhood vaccines, such as those for tetanus and whooping cough, wear off over time and, as they get older, young people are at risk of exposure to different diseases at school, camp or in other new situations," said Dr. Anne Schuchat, Director of CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases.

Research shows that preteens generally do not get preventive healthcare, visiting the doctor only when they are sick. One goal of this campaign is to encourage parents to take their preteens in for the recommended 11 or 12 year old check-up, which is endorsed by the American Academy for Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Family Physicians in addition to CDC. "The preteen check-up is a great time to talk with your child's healthcare provider about your child's development, nutrition, safety, and vaccination status," said Dr. Schuchat.

Dr. Renee Jenkins, President-Elect of the American Academy of Pediatrics, which is a partner with CDC in the campaign, stressed how important it is that parents take time to schedule a routine checkup for their 11 and 12 year olds.

“The preteen checkup is an important time to make sure children are also caught up on important childhood immunizations such as chickenpox, hepatitis B and measles-mumps-rubella (MMR),” said Dr. Jenkins. “Depending on their health and medical history, some preteens may require additional vaccines.”

The campaign also seeks to provide caregivers and their health care providers with the latest information about preteen vaccines and the preteen check-up in the form of fact sheets and posters. It also includes outreach to mainstream and ethnic media, as well as the creation of partnerships with national and state organizations who reach parents, and healthcare providers.

CDC’s preteen vaccine recommendations are supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the Society for Adolescent Medicine.

For more information about preteen vaccines, and the campaign, visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/preteen/.

Facts about Pertussis, Meningitis and HPV/Cervical Cancer:

Pertussis, or whooping cough, is one of the most common respiratory diseases in American teens. It causes a prolonged cough that can last weeks or months and can result in pneumonia or hospitalization. Reported pertussis cases in the United States are on the rise – there were more than 25,000 cases in 2005.

Meningococcal infections can be very serious, and can lead to meningitis and even death. These infections are not very common – an estimated 1,400 to 2,800 cases occur in the United States annually. However, about 10 percent of teens who get meningitis die from it, and another 15 percent have long-term disability.

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States, with about 20 million people currently infected. Women have an 80 percent chance of getting HPV by the time they are 50. Every year in the U.S., about 6.2 million people get a new HPV infection. HPV is most common in young people who are in their late teens and early twenties. In 2007, about 11,000 women in the United States will be diagnosed with cervical cancer, and about 3,600 women will die from the disease.

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