

# Vaccines for Preteens and Teens: What Parents Should Know

Last updated March 2012

## Why does my child need vaccines now?

Vaccines aren't just for babies. Some of the vaccines that babies get can wear off as kids get older. And as kids grow up they may come in contact with different diseases than when they were babies. There are vaccines that can help protect your preteen or teen from these other illnesses.

## What vaccines does my child need?

### **Tdap Vaccine**

This vaccine protects against three serious diseases: tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough). Preteens should get Tdap at age 11 or 12. If your teen didn't get a Tdap shot as a preteen, ask the their doctor or nurse about getting the shot now.

### **MCV4 Vaccine**

Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4) protects against some of the bacteria that can cause meningitis (swelling of the lining around the brain and spinal cord) and sepsis (an infection in the blood). Preteens need the MCV4 shot when they are 11 or 12 years old and then they need a booster shot at age 16. Teens who got the MCV4 shot when they were 13, 14 or 15 years old should still get a booster at 16 years. Older teens who haven't gotten any MCV4 shots should get it as soon as possible.

### **HPV Vaccine**

Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines help protect both girls and boys from HPV infection and cancer caused by HPV. Two HPV vaccines protect girls from the types of HPV that cause most cervical cancer. One HPV vaccine also helps protect both girls and boys from anal cancer and genital warts. HPV vaccines are given to preteens as 3 shots over 6 months when they are 11 or 12 years old. Preteens and teens need to get all 3 shots for full protection. Preteens and teens who haven't gotten all 3 HPV shots should ask the doctor or nurse about getting them now.

### **Flu Vaccine**

This vaccine protects against influenza (flu) and the other health problems flu can cause, like dehydration (loss of body

fluids), worsening of conditions like asthma or diabetes, or pneumonia. Preteens and teens should get the flu vaccine every year as soon as it's available, usually in the fall. It is very important for preteens and teens who have chronic health conditions like asthma or diabetes to get the flu vaccine as soon as possible every year.

## When should my child be vaccinated?

A good time to get these vaccines is during a yearly health checkup. Your preteen or teen can also get these vaccines at a physical exam required for sports, school, or camp. It's a good idea to ask the doctor or nurse every year if there are any vaccines that your child may need.

## What else should I know about these vaccines?

These vaccines have all been studied very carefully and are safe and effective. They can cause mild side effects, like soreness or redness where the shot was given. Some preteens and teens might faint after getting a shot. Sitting or lying down when getting a shot and then for about 15 minutes after the shot, can help prevent fainting. Serious side effects are rare. It is very important to tell the doctor or nurse if your child has any serious allergies, including allergies to yeast, latex or chicken eggs, before they receive any shots.

## How can I get help paying for these vaccines?

The Vaccines for Children (VFC) program provides vaccines for children ages 18 years and younger, who are not insured or under-insured, Medicaid-eligible, American Indian or Alaska Native. You can find out more about the VFC program by going online to [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and typing VFC in the search box.

## Where can I learn more?

Talk to your child's doctor or nurse about what vaccines they may need. You can also find more information about on CDC's Vaccines for Preteens and Teens website at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/teens](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/teens).



**U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services**  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention