

Immunizations

The importance of continued immunizations between ages 11 and about 21 years (adolescence) is not always recognized. Adolescents need to continue their immunization series and receive booster shots for continued protection against diseases. These vaccines are commonly recommended for adolescents between 11 and 13 years of age.

Vaccinations given during adolescence usually include:

Meningococcal vaccine. The meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV)-also called Menactra-is recommended for all adolescents who are between ages 11 and 12. Teens who have not yet received this vaccine should get it before entering high school or by age 15, whichever comes first. The vaccine is also recommended for all college freshmen living in dormitories, although the other form of the vaccine (meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine) can be given at this time instead of Menactra if it is not available.

The older vaccine version, licensed as Menomune, is made for children who are between ages 2 and 10.

Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis booster. A booster immunization known as Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) is usually given between 11 to 12 years of age. It is only given if it has been at least 5 years since the last DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis vaccine) dose was received. Two new combination booster vaccines that include pertussis are now available. Until now, combination booster immunizations given after age 6 did not include pertussis-only tetanus and diphtheria. Children entering grades 6 and above will be required to have a current Tdap booster unless they have had a tetanus booster within the last 5 years.

Chickenpox (varicella). Chickenpox immunization is recommended for teens and adults who are not already immune to the virus (if no history of chickenpox disease). Chickenpox infection can be very serious when it develops after childhood. ACIP now recommends that everyone get two shots at least 4 weeks apart. Children entering Kindergarten and grade 6 and above will be required to have 2 varicella shots unless they have had the chicken pox illness. All other students will need one shot unless they have had the chicken pox illness.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine In June 2006, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted to recommend the first vaccine developed to prevent cervical cancer and other diseases in females caused by certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV). The vaccine protects against four HPV types, which together cause 70% of cervical cancers and 90% of genital warts. The HPV vaccine is recommended for 11-12 year- old girls, and can be given to girls as young as 9 and women up to age 26.