

Don't Forget! Vaccines for Teens

As the new school year approaches, any medical visit is the perfect time to check that pre-teens' and teens' immunizations are up-to-date. Although most vaccines are delivered during early childhood, several immunizations are recommended for adolescents. Starting at the age of 11 or 12, all adolescents should receive three important vaccines and an annual flu vaccine:

- **Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis vaccine (1 dose):** a booster to protect against these three infectious diseases (pertussis is also called "whooping cough");
- **Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (2 doses)** (MCV4, or MenACWY): an immunization to protect against meningococcal disease (like meningitis or sepsis, a blood infection);
- **Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine (3 doses)** (Cervarix or Gardasil): an immunization recommended for both boys (Gardasil only) and girls (both Cervarix or Gardasil) to protect against many HPV-related cancers;
- **Influenza (flu) vaccine (each year):** a vaccine (either the flu shot or nasal spray) that is recommended yearly for everyone over 6 months of age to protect against different strains of seasonal influenza.

Time to Catch Up

Adolescents may need to catch-up on vaccines missed when they were younger, or receive boosters of a vaccine that requires more than one dose. To learn more about the vaccines recommended for adolescents, check out this [easy-to-use chart](#) from Vaccines.gov which lists the immunizations recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for children and youth ages seven through 18. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and all major medical groups adopt the ACIP recommendations.

The HPV Vaccine

The HPV vaccine prevents several types of cancer. Specifically, HPV infection can cause cervical cancer in women, penile cancer in men, and anal or oropharyngeal (throat) cancers in both sexes. In fact, in 2011, HPV may have exceeded smoking as a cause of throat cancer in men. Gardasil can also protect against genital warts, which are spread by sexual or skin-to-skin contact. The HPV vaccine is licensed, safe, and effective for females and males ages 9 through 26, and the [ACIP recommends](#) that all adolescents begin receiving the vaccine at age 11 or 12. Older adolescents who didn't begin the series at age 11 or 12 are encouraged to start as soon as possible to "catch up." For females, catch-up is recommended up until age 26; for males, catch-up is recommended until age 21 (and until age 26 for males who have sex with other males). To learn more about why the HPV vaccine is recommended for adolescent boys, click [here](#) for a video! *Why so young?* For the HPV vaccine to work as it is intended, adolescents should complete all three doses before any sexual activity with another person. The human body produces more antibodies against HPV when given the vaccine at a younger age.

Vaccinations and the Affordable Care Act

All youth under age 18 who are enrolled in new group or individual private health plans are eligible to receive the following vaccines without any cost-sharing requirements (when provided by an in-network provider):

- Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis
- Haemophilus Influenza Type b (Hib)
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV)
- Inactivated Poliovirus
- Influenza
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)
- Meningococcal (Meningitis)
- Rotavirus
- Varicella (Chicken Pox)