

HealthyActions

Achieving Your Goals for Healthy Living



Stay Healthy: A Parent's Immunization Guide to Protecting Your Teen

Did You Know?

Meningococcal (muh-nin-juh-cockle) disease kills 1 in 8 American teens who get it.¹ The meningococcal vaccine protects against this disease. Your doctor may want to give this vaccine before your child goes to college or high school.

Protect Your Child from Serious Diseases

As a parent, your job is to protect your child. You can do that by making sure your child gets immunized.

Immunizations are not just for babies. As children grow older, they are at risk for getting different diseases. New vaccines can now protect your child from diseases that may cause cancer or brain infection. The vaccines will protect your child now and in the future. Preventing diseases is always better than having to treat them.

Immunization

Becoming immune to (protected from) a disease. Immunizations are usually vaccinations. They are also called vaccines or shots.

How Do Immunizations Work?

Immunizations strengthen your body's **immune system**. They help protect you from some diseases. Here's how they work. A weak form of the disease germ is injected into your body. Your body makes **antibodies** to fight the germ. The antibodies stay there. If the actual disease germ ever gets into your body, the antibodies destroy it. You do not get the disease.

Immune system

Protects your body from germs, bacteria, and viruses. Also protects against cancer cells.

Antibodies Fight germs.

What Shots Does My Child Need?

These shots are recommended for most children by the time they are 13 years old²:

- Hepatitis B (3 or 4 doses)
- Polio (4 doses)
- Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) (2 doses)
- Varicella (chickenpox) (2 doses)
- Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (4 doses DTaP and 1 booster Tdap)
- Meningococcal (1 dose)
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) (girls only) (3 doses)



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Make sure your child gets immunized. Talk to your child's doctor if you have any concerns. It's your job to protect your child.

Are Vaccines Safe?

Vaccines are created and tested over many years. They are licensed by the government only when they are effective and safe. Every batch is tested for safety. Side effects are watched. Serious side effects are reported.

Your child may have mild side effects from a shot, such as:

- Soreness where the shot was given.
- A low-grade fever.

Serious reactions are very rare. Your child is far more likely to be harmed by diseases than by the shots that prevent them.

What about the Newer Vaccines for Older Children?

The meningococcal (muh-nin-juh-cockle) vaccine will protect your child from meningococcal disease. This disease is spread by coughing and sneezing. It can cause meningitis. This is an infection around your brain and spinal cord. Meningitis is often fatal.

Human papillomavirus (pap-uh-lo-muh-virus) (HPV) is spread by sexual contact. It can cause genital warts or cervical cancer. Your daughter may not be sexually active now. But the HPV vaccine will protect her now and in the future.

Both these vaccines are safe. Ask your child's doctor what vaccines your child needs. Follow the doctor's schedule to give your child the best protection against diseases.

Are Vaccines Really Necessary?

Many diseases are becoming rare in the United States. Travelers from other countries can carry diseases into our country. Children who are not immunized can get these diseases. They can cause paralysis (loss of movement), mental changes, cancer, deafness, blindness, or even death.

References

1. National Foundation for Infectious Diseases. "The Changing Epidemiology of Meningococcal Disease among U.S. Children, Adolescents and Young Adults." Available at: http://www.nfid.org/pdf/meningitis/FINALChanging_Epidemiology_of_Meningococcal_Disease.pdf. Accessed June 23, 2007.
2. CDC. "Recommended Immunization Schedules for Persons Aged 0-18 Years—United States, 2007." Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/wk/mm5551-Immunization.pdf>. Accessed June 21, 2007.

