



# Vaccines for Preteens and Teens: What Parents Should Know

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## 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 helps protect 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.

### **Meningococcal Vaccine**

Meningococcal conjugate vaccine protects against some of the bacteria that can cause meningitis (swelling of the lining around the brain and spinal cord) and septicemia (an infection in the blood). Preteens need the first meningococcal shot when they are 11 or 12 years old and a second meningococcal shot at age 16. Teens who got the meningococcal shot when they were 13, 14, or 15 years old should still get a second shot at age 16. Older teens who haven't gotten any meningococcal shots should get one dose 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 who haven't started or finished the HPV vaccine series should ask the doctor or nurse about getting them now.

### **Flu Vaccine**

The annual flu vaccine is the best way to reduce the chances of getting seasonal flu and spreading it to others. Even

healthy preteens and teens can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. While all preteens and teens should get a flu vaccine, it's especially important for those with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease to get vaccinated. The best time to get the flu vaccine is as soon after it's available in your community, ideally by October. While it's best to be vaccinated before flu begins causing illness in your community, flu vaccination can be beneficial as long as flu viruses are circulating, even in January or later.

## 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. They can cause mild side effects, like soreness or redness in the part of the arm 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, 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 these vaccines on CDC's Vaccines for Preteens and Teens website at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/teens](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/teens).

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