

Adolescent Immunizations

What Parents
Need to Know

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**MO Chapter, American
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Immunizations (also known as vaccinations) are shots that are given to stimulate the body's immune system against a variety of diseases. This helps prevent serious illness should individuals come into contact with the diseases later on in life. **Most parents are familiar with the series of immunizations that children receive between birth and kindergarten entry.** As a result of these immunizations, children no longer suffer from many of the childhood illnesses that their grandparents did.

Today, **parents should be aware of the immunizations that are available to protect older children as they enter adolescence and young adulthood.** Some are required for enrollment in Missouri public schools while others are recommended but not required. Parents and adolescents are encouraged to meet with their health care provider to make sure that required immunization have been completed and to learn how other serious illnesses can be prevented through recommended vaccines.

plus a diphtheria and tetanus booster during adolescence. A newly available adolescent booster (Tdap) also includes protection against pertussis. This new booster is recommended because pertussis commonly affects adolescents and young adults.

Polio – All students are required to have received their childhood series against polio before kindergarten. No adolescent boosters are needed.

Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) – Most students should have received two immunizations prior to kindergarten. If not, the second one will need to be given in adolescence.

Hepatitis B – Most adolescents in Missouri have already received this series of immunizations. If not, this needs to be completed prior to entry to middle school.

Several immunizations are recommended for Missouri adolescents but are not required for middle or high school attendance:

Varicella (chicken pox) – Chicken pox has become a more serious illness, especially in teens and adults. If an adolescent has not previously had the disease or the immunization against it, immunization is recommended. Those who were immunized as younger children may need a booster.

Hepatitis A – Hepatitis A is a disease of the liver that is spread in a variety of ways, often through food. Poor hand washing by those preparing food in cafeterias or restaurants is commonly responsible. Most Americans are therefore at risk for exposure to the disease. A series of two immunizations offers protection against Hepatitis A.

Meningococcus – The meningococcus bacteria causes a devastating and frequently deadly form of meningitis. A single-dose vaccine against four of the most common types of meningococcus is now available and recommended for those 11-12 years of age and older.

Influenza (“flu”) – Influenza is a serious respiratory illness that can cause weeks of illness in otherwise healthy people. For those with chronic health problems such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease or other conditions, becoming sick with influenza can mean hospitalization or even death. “Flu shots” are available each fall to try to prevent illness associated with this infection.

Human papilloma virus (HPV) – Nearly 80% of adult women are exposed to HPV at some time in their lives. Infection with this virus is responsible for almost all cases of cervical cancer. A vaccine is now available to protect girls and women against the most common types of HPV. By getting this series of three immunizations early in adolescence, it is hoped that more than two-thirds of cervical cancer cases can be prevented.

The following immunizations are required for middle and high school attendance in Missouri:

Diphtheria, Pertussis (whooping cough) and Tetanus – These immunizations are combined into a single injection for the childhood series. All students are required to receive their childhood series



An immunization visit with your adolescent's health care provider is recommended at 11-12 years of age.

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