

Your Preteen or Teen Still Needs Vaccines



Planning playdates may not be on your parenting to-do list anymore. But with preteens and teens, there's something you still need to do: Make sure they're vaccinated. All preteens and teens should get an annual flu vaccine, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For a shot against serious diseases, they also need these three vaccines:

Meningococcal

Protects against: Meningococcal disease, a serious illness that can lead to meningitis — an infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord — and blood infections.

Who needs it: All 11- to 12-year-olds should get a MenACWY vaccine. It protects preteens and teens against the four types of bacteria (A, C, W and Y) that cause most meningococcal disease. If your teen is 13, 14 or 15 and hasn't received the MenACWY vaccine, it's not too late. At 16, all teens need a booster MenACWY, including those who got their first vaccine between ages 13 and 15.

Shot Strategies

If your teen doesn't go to the pediatrician for a yearly physical, make an appointment for an immunization update. For a vaccine schedule you can print out, go to [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and search for "immunization schedules."

HPV

Protects against: Human papillomavirus (HPV), which is spread through skin-to-skin contact. Every year, about 14 million people — including teens — are infected with HPV, which can lead to cancer. An HPV-related cancer strikes roughly 36,000 U.S. adults each year. According to the CDC, the HPV vaccine can prevent most of them.

Who needs it: All 11- to 12-year-olds need two HPV vaccine doses at least five months apart. Teens who don't get their first shot until age 15 or older need three HPV doses. Shots can be given as early as age 9. It is best to get vaccinated before being exposed to the virus.

Tdap

Protects against: Three serious diseases — tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough (pertussis).

Who needs it: Between ages 11 and 12, preteens need a single Tdap dose. After that, they'll need a Td or Tdap booster shot every 10 years.