

# Preteens Need Vaccines to Stay Healthy

**Protect the Circle of Life:** “Let us put our minds together to see what life we can make for our children.” - *Sitting Bull, Lakota Sioux, 1877*

## Why should my preteens and teens get vaccines?

Immunization is one of the most important tools we have to protect our children from disease. If enough people in our communities are immunized, vaccine-preventable diseases will not be passed to our babies, our elders, our families, and our communities.

## What shots do my preteen and teen children need?

There are four vaccines recommended at 11-12:

### *Quadrivalent meningococcal conjugate vaccine*

This vaccine protects against some strains of bacteria that cause meningococcal disease such as meningitis and blood infections (septicemia). These infections don't happen very often, but can be very dangerous when they do. Meningococcal disease can very quickly become very serious—even deadly. Some survivors will have a long-term disability such as deafness, brain damage, or an amputated limb. The meningococcal vaccine is the best way to protect preteens and teens from getting meningococcal disease. Teens also need a second shot of the meningococcal vaccine when they turn 16.

### *Tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine*

This vaccine protects against whooping cough, or pertussis, which causes severe coughing fits. The coughing fits can become so bad that preteens and teens can miss weeks of school and social activities. They can even break a rib from coughing. Whooping cough spreads very easily and can be deadly for infants in the community who get it. The Tdap vaccine is the best way to protect preteens and teen from getting whooping cough. This shot also protects against tetanus and diphtheria.

### *Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine*

This vaccine protects against infection with the types of HPV that most commonly cause cancer. These cancers include: cervical, vaginal, and vulvar cancer in women; penile cancer in men; as well as anal cancer, throat cancer, and genital warts in both men and women. HPV infections cause about 27,000 cancers every year. HPV vaccine is the best way to prevent most HPV infections that lead to cancer.

### *Influenza (flu) vaccine*

This vaccine protects against the flu. The flu is an infection of the nose, throat and lungs caused by influenza viruses. Flu can cause mild to severe illness, and in some cases, it can cause death.

Flu can be especially serious for preteens and teens with chronic health conditions such as diabetes or asthma, because they are at a greater risk for complications from the flu. However, even healthy adolescents can get very sick from the flu. While most preteens and teens who get sick with the flu recover within a couple of weeks, some will get complications like sinus infections, or pneumonia (a serious lung infection).

## Are these shots safe?

Yes, these vaccines are very safe. All of these shots have been studied very carefully and are continually watched to be sure they are safe and work well.

Preteens and teens may experience mild side effects such as redness and soreness in the area of the arm where the shot was given. Serious side effects from these vaccines are rare. Most side effects from vaccines are very minor and the benefits of these vaccines far outweigh any possible risk of side effects.

Some preteens and teens may faint after getting a shot or any other medical procedure. Sitting or lying down for about 15 minutes after getting shots can help prevent injuries that could happen if your child were to fall while fainting.

## Can I get help paying for these shots?

American Indian/Alaska Native children younger than 19 years of age can get shots for free through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program.

All IHS, tribal, and urban Indian health clinics offer shots through the VFC program. So do many private doctors. Check with your healthcare provider or your local clinic.



Ask the doctor or nurse which vaccines your child needs. Keep the circle strong.

For more information about HPV infection and HPV vaccine, visit [www.cdc.gov/HPV](http://www.cdc.gov/HPV)

