

Are my teen's vaccines up to date? Maybe not—HPV, pertussis, meningococcal meningitis and flu



Today we bring you more advice from the Atlantic Regional Osteopathic Convention 2012 Adolescent session, where Dr. Amanda Manning updated us about adolescent vaccines. As always, be sure to review with your child's doctor any contraindications as well as reasons to vaccinate early with all of these immunizations.

Tdap : This vaccine, which prevents **p**ertussus (whooping cough), **t**etanus and **d**iphtheria, is given to 11- 12 year olds. But since the pertussis component of the Tdap vaccine was not recommended until six years ago, your teen may have received the formulation without pertussis protection (dT). If so, he should now get a dose which contains pertussis. Recent evidence shows teens and adults lose their immunity to whooping cough and can spread disease to vulnerable infants and young children.

The meningitis vaccine, or “quadrivalent meningoccal conjugate vaccine”: Pediatricians routinely give this vaccine to tweens. New recommendations add a booster dose at age sixteen years. If the first dose was not given until age sixteen, a booster dose is not needed. Read our earlier post for more information about this vaccine and the disease it prevents.

HPV vaccine: This vaccine protects against Human Papillomavirus (HPV), which causes cancer of the cervix, vagina, penis, and throat. HPV also causes genital warts. Most people who are infected pick up the virus unknowingly during their first two years of sexual activity. In fact, eighty percent of women by age 50 are infected with some form of HPV. Luckily, the majority of infected women do not develop illness. The Pap tests that women receive at their yearly gynecology visits screen for cervical cancer caused by this virus. Here are common questions parents ask about the HPV vaccine:

Is this vaccine safe for my kids?- it's too new

No more need to “watch and wait” for more safety data before giving it to your teen. Health care workers have given over 40 million doses of HPV vaccine worldwide so far with no serious adverse events. The vaccine has a good track record of safety, despite what some internet sources as well as politicians would have you believe. The side effects of local soreness and mild fever are the same as those seen in all other vaccines.

Should both girls and boys be vaccinated?

Yes, but only the brand Gardasil is approved for use in males.

Isn't giving the vaccine at 11 or 12 years old “too young”? My kid is not sexually active.

Younger teens make better antibodies from this vaccine than older teens. The vaccine is most effective before the onset of sexual activity, before kids could be exposed to the virus.

If my teen forgets a dose, does she need to restart the series?

Three doses complete this vaccine series. Fortunately, if you forget to bring in your teen for the follow up dose, your teen's doctor can simply continue the series wherever your teen left off and the vaccine will still be effective.

Can my young adult aged children also get the vaccine ?

Yes, but for Gardasil only up through 26 years and for Cervarix through age 25. Cervarix is not approved for males. Last year, the FDA did not find there was enough of a decrease in disease to widen the age range for Gardasil after age 26.

FLU: The guidelines for the flu vaccine are the easiest to remember of all the vaccines. **Give a dose of flu vaccine to every teen every year, before the start of flu season.** In fact, EVERYONE should get flu vaccine every year, including adults. The mist-in-the-nose form is safe for anyone without asthma or other chronic health conditions, and now, safety data shows most everyone can receive the injectable form, even kids with egg allergy. Please see our earlier post for more information about the flu virus, the flu vaccine, and how to tell if your child has the flu.

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