

Teens Need Shots Too!

Do teens need shots? Yes, teens need immunizations, too, and many people do not know they are just as important for teens as they are for children and infants. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends adolescents receive the following vaccines: Tdap, Meningococcal, HPV, as well as an annual Influenza vaccination. Adolescence is also a good time to catch up on other recommended vaccines that may have been missed such as Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, MMR, Varicella, and Polio. Public Health - Idaho North Central District (PH-INCD) offers regular immunization clinics in each of the five counties it serves.

Recommended teen vaccinations protect against the following diseases:

- **Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis:** A tetanus booster with a vaccine called Tdap which also protects against diphtheria and pertussis. Pertussis (whooping cough) spreads through coughing and sneezing. It causes coughing spells which make it hard to eat, drink, or even breathe. Since 1990, there has been a dramatic increase in reports of adolescent and adult pertussis. Teens with pertussis miss an average of five days of school with 14 days of disrupted sleep.
- **Meningococcal disease** is a bacterial disease which causes swelling around the brain and spinal cord; invasive disease spreads quickly and can destroy limbs or lead to death. The disease can be spread in crowded situations like schools, dorms and barracks, through sharing drinks, and kissing. The peak of meningococcal disease incidence occurs during adolescence between the ages of 15 and 24.
- **Human papillomavirus (HPV)** causes cervical cancer and genital warts. The three dose HPV vaccine series protects against four types of HPV which are most commonly associated with cervical cancer and genital warts. The ACIP recommends adolescent girls start the vaccine series at 11-12 years old. Since HPV is spread through sexual contact, boys need the vaccine too, but current licensing only allows vaccination of girls. It is expected that the vaccine will be approved for boys soon.

PH-INCD and the Idaho Immunization Program are working with local secondary schools to increase the number of immunized teens. One way to track student immunization records is IRIS. IRIS is a statewide, confidential, secure, and voluntary immunization registry for people of all ages. IRIS makes immunization records readily retrievable in case an immunization record is lost or if a person changes healthcare providers. To have a teen entered into IRIS, the parent signs an IRIS consent form, provides the teen's immunization record, and the data is entered into the registry. Schools and health districts can generate reports to show which teens need additional vaccines.

So, if you have teens in your life, make sure they are protected with the recommended immunizations and get their immunization information into IRIS. Adults may also sign up for IRIS. For more information contact Melissa Morgan, RN, IRIS Coordinator for District II at (208) 799-0376 or mmorgan@phd2.idaho.gov.