



## Children, Preteens & Teens

Preparing for school means gathering supplies and back packs. It's also the perfect time to make sure children are up to date on their vaccines. Getting all of the recommended vaccines is one of the most important things parents can do to protect their children's health.

When children are not vaccinated, they are at increased risk for disease and can spread disease to others in their classroom and community – including babies who are too young to be fully vaccinated, and people with weakened immune systems due to cancer and other health conditions. Schools are highly susceptible to outbreaks of infectious diseases because students can easily transmit illnesses to one another as a result of poor hand washing, uncovered coughs and dense populations.

Children age 4 to 6 are due for boosters of four vaccines: DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis), chickenpox, MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) and polio. Older children – like preteens and teens – need Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis), MCV (meningococcal conjugate vaccine) and HPV (human papilloma virus) vaccines. A yearly flu vaccine is recommended for all children 6 months and older.

### **Vaccines are important for protecting children against serious, and sometimes deadly, diseases.**

- Immunizations create a shield of protection at school and at home. Given recent outbreaks, it's important that children be protected against dangerous and highly contagious diseases like pertussis (also called whooping cough).
- Vaccines don't just protect your child. Some diseases, like whooping cough, can be deadly for newborns or infants. You can help protect our littlest community members from being exposed to vaccine-preventable diseases by making sure your own child is up to date.

- Vaccine preventable diseases are only a plane ride away. E.g. Measles epidemics are occurring in Great Britain, and rubella cases have skyrocketed in Japan.
- Vaccines are among the safest and most cost-effective ways to prevent disease. Protecting your child from preventable diseases will help keep them healthy and in school.
- When a child comes down with disease such as whooping cough, chicken pox or the flu, he or she may miss a lot of school while recovering. Somebody will need to stay home to provide care and make trips to the doctor.
- Schools are a prime venue for transmitting vaccine-preventable diseases, and school-age children can further spread disease to their families and others with whom they come in contact.

### **Talk to your children's doctor to make sure they get the vaccinations they need when they need them.**

- As you get ready to send your children back to school, educate yourself. Learn about the benefits and possible side effects of vaccinations.
- If you haven't already, check your child's immunization record and schedule a visit to their physician or clinic. Doing so now will avoid a potential last minute rush and will help make sure there are no surprises on the first day back to school.
- Most schools require children to be up to date on vaccinations before enrolling or starting school in order to protect the health of all students.
- If parents are unsure of their state's school immunization requirements, they should check with their child's doctor, school or local health department.

### **Vaccines are very safe.**

- Vaccines are thoroughly tested before licensing and carefully monitored even after they are licensed to ensure that they are very safe.
- Vaccines are among the safest and most cost-effective ways to prevent disease. They could help reduce time missed from school due to illness, and save money on expensive treatments or hospitalizations.