

## Mandatory immunizations to enter 7th grade

Dear **Parent/Guardian**,

As children reach their teen years, their risk of becoming ill due to certain serious infectious diseases increases. Vaccines are recommended to protect adolescents now and into adulthood.

Ideally, adolescents should get their vaccines during a routine pre-adolescent check-up at age 11-12 years. Older adolescents (age 13-18 years) who have not been vaccinated should receive their vaccines as soon as possible. They are considered **delinquent when they enter 7<sup>th</sup> grade without them!** Recommended vaccines protect adolescents from very serious illnesses:

- **Meningococcal vaccines** protect against infection with a type of bacteria that causes meningitis and blood infection (sepsis). Adolescents are at increased risk of getting this infection. This is a rare, but extremely serious disease that kills up to 10 percent of those who get it. Up to 20 percent of survivors will have serious long-term or permanent complications such as brain damage, kidney damage, deafness, or amputations. Please note that adolescents need a booster vaccine at age 16. Parents should also ask about a second type of meningococcal vaccine (meningococcal B) that may be appropriate for their child between ages 16-18 years.
- **Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine** protects against a cancer-causing infection. The HPV vaccine is given as a 2-dose series over a six-month period to protect both females and males. Teens or young adults who have not gotten any or all of the recommended doses should make an appointment to be vaccinated. Younger adolescents have higher antibody levels to vaccination compared to older adolescents and young adults. This may result in longer lasting immunity for those vaccinated earlier in adolescence. If started after age 15, a 3-dose series is needed for full protection.
- **Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap) vaccine** includes protection against pertussis (whooping cough), which has been on the rise in the US especially among children 10-19 years old and babies under five years old. Vaccination is important even if your child was vaccinated as an infant, because the protection from those vaccines wears off.

In addition to these vaccines, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also recommends that everyone age six months and older get an **influenza** vaccine every year. There are also vaccines that adolescents may need if they weren't fully vaccinated when they were younger and vaccines for adolescents who have certain risk factors.

I strongly recommend a comprehensive health care visit for all adolescents at age 11-12 years or as early as possible thereafter. Please make an appointment with your child's healthcare professional and be sure to check that your child's immunizations are up to date. For more information on which vaccines adolescents need, visit <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/immunize/schedule/#easy>

Thank you,  
School nurse