

# Immunizing Your Adolescent Is a Must for Back to School

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Aug. 3, 2017

Contact: [news@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:news@dhhs.nc.gov)  
919-855-4840

RALEIGH – While making your family's back-to-school checklist, don't forget to make sure your preteens and teenagers are current on their vaccinations.

"Vaccines are one of the greatest public health achievements, leading to dramatic declines in cases of infectious diseases and saving lives," said Acting State Health Director, Kelly Kimple, MD, MPH. "Vaccines are a critical component in the commitment to the health of our children, ourselves and our communities."

As children move into adolescence, they are more susceptible to certain diseases, making it more important to stay current with immunizations. For preteens, ages 11-12, there are four recommended vaccines, some of which are required for school entry in North Carolina:

- Meningococcal Conjugate Vaccine (MCV4) protects against some of the bacteria that cause meningococcal disease. **REQUIRED by age 12 or 7<sup>th</sup> grade (whichever comes first)**
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine helps protect girls and boys from HPV infection and cancers caused by HPV.
- Tdap vaccine protects against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough). **REQUIRED by age 12 or 7<sup>th</sup> grade (whichever comes first)**
- Influenza (flu) vaccine is recommended every year for all children ages 11-12, even healthy kids.

"When not vaccinated, our teens are at significantly higher risk for diseases, and they can spread those diseases into their school community," [NC Academy of Family Physicians](#) President Charles Rhodes, MD, said. "Preteens and teenagers face potentially life-threatening diseases, including meningitis and cancers caused by HPV."

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Immunizations continue through the teen years. A booster dose of MCV4 is needed at age 16 to maintain protection against bacteria that can cause meningococcal disease. Depending on risk factors, some teens may need a serogroup B meningococcal vaccine as well. Check with your pediatrician or primary care physician about which vaccines your teenager should have.

"It's easy to keep your adolescent immunized," said Scott St. Clair, MD, President of the [NC Pediatric Society](#). "You can use any health care visit, including for sports or camp physicals, checkups and sick visits to have your preteen or teen vaccinated. We suggest keeping a conversation open with your health care professional to know the what and when of your adolescent immunizations."

The North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians, the NC Pediatric Society and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Public Health are partnering to raise awareness to North Carolinians of all ages, but especially adolescents, to protect themselves from certain vaccine-preventable diseases. This effort aligns with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention designating August each year as [National Immunization Awareness Month](#) focusing on the importance of vaccines for people of all ages.

Join us in making sure our young stay healthy. Get more information and learn about the recommended immunization schedule at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/teens](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/teens) and [www.immunize.nc.gov](http://www.immunize.nc.gov).

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The **North Carolina Division of Public Health, Immunization Branch** promotes public health through the identification and elimination of vaccine-preventable diseases like polio, hepatitis B, measles, chickenpox, whooping cough, rubella (German measles) and mumps.

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