

# Questions and answers for parents about pre-teen vaccines

**V**accines are not just for infants. As children get older, the immunity provided by childhood vaccines can wear off. Children also develop risks for more diseases as they enter their pre-teen years. For these reasons, they need vaccinations too. Doctors recommend pre-teens get several vaccines at their 11 or 12 year old check-up.

## **Q:** What vaccines do pre-teens need?

- A:**
- **Tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis vaccine (Tdap).**
  - **Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4).**
  - **Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, also known as the “cervical cancer vaccine.”**

The Tdap and MCV4 vaccines are recommended for all pre-teens. The HPV vaccine is only recommended for girls. Pre-teens should get the following vaccinations if they did not receive them during childhood: Hepatitis B, varicella (chickenpox), polio, and measles-mumps-rubella (MMR). Pre-teens who were vaccinated against chickenpox as infants should receive a booster shot now.

## **Q:** Why are these vaccines necessary?

- A:** These vaccines prevent serious, sometimes life-threatening diseases. Immunity from some childhood vaccines can decrease over time, so people need to get another dose of the vaccine during their pre-teen years. Also, as children move into adolescence, they are at greater risk of catching certain diseases, like meningitis and HPV.

## **Q:** When should pre-teens be vaccinated?

- A:** Pre-teens can receive all of these vaccines during their 11 or 12 year old check-up. If your child missed that check-up, ask your child’s doctor about getting the vaccines now.

## **Q:** Are these vaccines safe and effective?

- A:** All of these vaccines have been widely studied and are safe and effective. Pre-teens may experience mild side effects such as redness and soreness where they get the injection. These vaccines are recommended by the American Academy for Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## **Q:** Can I get help paying for vaccines?

- A:** For families with health insurance, all or most of the cost of vaccines is usually covered. Children age 18 and younger may be eligible to get vaccines for free through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program if they are: Medicaid eligible; uninsured; or American Indian or Alaska Native. Doctors can charge a fee to give each shot. However, VFC vaccines cannot be denied to an eligible child if the family cannot afford the fee. To learn more about the VFC program, visit the website at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/) or contact your State VFC Coordinator. A list of VFC Coordinators is available at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/contacts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/contacts.htm).

**For more information on vaccines,  
ask your child’s healthcare provider  
or call 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)  
Website: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/preteen/](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/preteen/)**

**Ask your child’s doctor  
about these vaccines today.**



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