



News Release

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Washington teen immunization rates show mixed results

It's the perfect time to ensure kids are current on their shots as they prepare to go back to school

OLYMPIA — It's hard to believe, but school is right around the corner. Unfortunately, many teens in our state will start school unprotected from some diseases, including the cancer causing human papillomavirus (HPV).

Only 12.5 percent of teen boys and 45 percent of teen girls had all three doses of the HPV vaccine, according to the [2013 National Immunization Survey for teens](#). There are two HPV vaccines. Both protect against HPV strains that cause 75 percent of cervical cancers. One also protects against HPV strains that cause 90 percent of genital warts in males and females. This vaccine isn't required for school entry, yet back-to-school time is a good time for parents to make sure both young kids and teens have all the immunizations, required or not.

Teens are due for several other important immunizations other than HPV, including Tdap and meningococcal vaccines. The Tdap and meningococcal vaccines protect teens from getting whooping cough and meningitis. Tdap and meningococcal vaccine rates for teens aged 13–17 have increased over the last year. HPV vaccine rates have increased as well, but are still well below the national goal of 80 percent.

“Immunizations are among the most effective ways to protect kids from serious and preventable diseases, some of which have no cure or treatment,” said State Health Officer Dr. Kathy Lofy. “Take the opportunity to protect all your kids, regardless of age, from disease. If your child is at the doctor's office for any reason, ask if he or she has received all recommended vaccines, including HPV.”

Teen immunization rates

July 24, 2014

Page 2

Parents should use the next several weeks to make sure their kids have all the immunizations they need to begin school. They should also schedule a yearly health checkup and have their kids get any immunizations that are due.

Data for younger kids will be released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in late August.

Our state's immunization rates show that many young kids are vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases as well, such as measles and whooping cough. Outbreaks of these two diseases this year show the need for more kids to be protected.

Several immunizations are required before kids can start school and child care. This year, kids in grades 6 to 12 must have had one dose of Tdap vaccine. This booster shot protects older kids against whooping cough. Young kids get a vaccine that prevents the same diseases, but protection starts to wear off in the early teen years.

Kids starting kindergarten through sixth grade must get two doses of the chickenpox (varicella) vaccine or have a health care provider document that they've had the disease. Parent-reported history of chickenpox is not enough.

Washington provides all recommended vaccines at no cost for kids through age 18, and they're available from health care providers across the state. Although health care providers may charge an office-visit fee and an administration fee for the vaccine, a family that can't afford to pay can ask that the administration fee be waived.

For help finding a health care provider or an immunization clinic, call your local health agency, visit the [ParentHelp123 resource finder](#), or call the Family Health Hotline, 1-800-322-2588.

The [Department of Health website](#) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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