

Adolescent Immunizations Article

Help your tween get ahead of the class with routine vaccination and health screenings

As parents, we do our best to keep our kids healthy and safe. Vaccines are a part of the plan. Babies and toddlers have regular visits with routine vaccines throughout early childhood, but we often forget about our adolescents. There are certain vaccines that are specifically needed in this age group, including meningococcal, HPV, and Tdap vaccines.

“Some parents worry about vaccine safety,” notes Dr. Kelli Tice, Florida Blue vice president of medical affairs and chief health equity officer. “That’s where their child’s doctor can help. Let them know your concerns and how you’re feeling. They’ll tell you what is needed, listen to and discuss your safety concerns, while helping you understand why these vaccines are important.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends all preteens and teens receive the following vaccines starting around age 12 to protect against serious diseases.

- **Meningococcal vaccines** protect against a type of bacteria that can cause serious illnesses. The two most common types of illnesses include infections of the lining of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) and bloodstream. All preteens should get the meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MenACWY). Teens may also receive a serogroup B meningococcal vaccine (MenB).
- **The HPV vaccine** protects both girls and boys from future infections that can lead to certain types of cancer, like cervical, mouth, throat, and other cancers of the reproductive system. Your child will need two doses of this vaccine and can start as early as 9 years old.
- **Tdap vaccine** protects against three serious diseases: tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough). [In Florida, seventh graders](#) need to have updated Tdap vaccines.

Preteens and teens should also get a yearly flu vaccine and catch up on any vaccines they’ve missed.

Your child’s doctor is a good source for reliable information on vaccines as well as other areas of concern you or your child may have. That’s why annual wellness checkups are so important, explains Dr. Tice. “In addition to immunizations, it’s important to schedule a back-to-school health checkup for your child. This can help detect any underlying health issues and ensure your child is ready for the new school year.” Dr. Tice says that parents should ask about all the shots their preteen needs, not just what is required for seventh grade.

If your child’s doctor does not have these vaccines in the office, ask where you should go. Other vaccine locations include:

- [Florida Blue Centers](#)
- Community health clinics
- Local pharmacies
- School-based health centers
- [Health departments](#)

SAVE THE DATE

As flu season approaches, our Florida Blue Centers will offer four vaccine clinics for children and adults. Vaccinations will be administered by on-site Walgreens’ pharmacists. Open to the public, this year’s vaccine clinics will be held:

Thursday, September 7, 2023
Saturday, September 23, 2023

Thursday, October 12, 2023
Saturday, October 28, 2023

[Click here](#) to schedule an appointment at a Florida Blue Center. In addition to the flu vaccine, other vaccines available at most locations include:

- COVID-19
- COVID-19 booster
- Flu — for ages 65 and up
- Hepatitis A-Adult
- Hepatitis B-Adult
- HPV
- Pneumonia
- Shingles
- Tdap
- **NEW:** RSV vaccine for adults 60 and older

If you have questions, you can also call 1-877-352-5830 to speak to a Florida Blue care nurse. For more information on vaccines, visit [FloridaBlue.com/Shots](https://www.floridablue.com/shots).