



## Tools for Schools

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As your child's school nurse, I want to inform you of two serious diseases impacting schools across the country. Pertussis, also known as "whooping cough," is a serious disease that spreads easily and continues to be a problem in the United States among adolescents. And infection caused by hepatitis A virus is the most commonly reported vaccine-preventable hepatitis infection in the United States.

In the prevention and control of influenza, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has recently recommended that all children aged 6 months through 18 years receive vaccination against influenza for the 2009-2010 influenza season. Other age and risk groups previously recommended by the ACIP for annual vaccination against influenza have not changed.

Most babies and young children get shots to prevent pertussis. However, this protection typically begins to wear off by the time they reach their preteen years. Children are at higher risk in school settings where they're in close contact with lots of other children.

There is a booster shot for preteens and teens that adds pertussis protection to the routine tetanus and diphtheria (Td) booster shot. Adolescents aged 11–18 years should receive a single dose of Tdap instead of Td for booster immunization against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis if they have completed the recommended childhood DTP/DTaP vaccination series and have not received Td or Tdap. The preferred age for Tdap vaccination is 11–12 years. Some states have vaccination requirements for students entering specific grades. Check with your state's department of health for more information.

Infection caused by hepatitis A virus is usually mild but, when it is severe, it can cause children to miss many days of school. You may not be able to tell if your child or a playmate has hepatitis A. Children who get hepatitis A may have fever, jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), tiredness, and loss of appetite. Others may not have any signs or symptoms but can still spread the disease.

Hepatitis A virus is spread through contact with stool, person-to-person contact, or by eating or drinking contaminated foods or liquids. For children, the first dose of vaccine should be given at 12 to 23 months of age. Children who are not vaccinated by 2 years of age can be vaccinated at later visits. Two doses of the vaccine are needed for lasting protection. These doses should be given at least 6 months apart. Hepatitis A vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines. Hepatitis A vaccine, like any medicine, could possibly cause problems such as severe allergic reactions. The risk of hepatitis A vaccine causing serious harm or death is extremely small. Getting hepatitis A vaccine is generally much safer than getting the disease.

Please refer to the following vaccination checklist to make sure your adolescent child stays fully protected.

For children ages 11-12 years:

Recommended for all pre-teens and teens, routinely or when indicated and feasible:	Recommended for some pre-teens and teens who are at increased risk for infection due to certain underlying medical conditions:	Vaccinations your child may have missed:
✓ <b>Tdap booster</b> —Protects against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (whooping cough)	✓ <b>Influenza</b> —Helps protect against influenza (flu)	✓ <b>Hepatitis B</b> —Protects against hepatitis B
✓ <b>Meningococcal Conjugate</b> —Protects against meningococcal disease	✓ <b>Hepatitis A</b> —Protects against hepatitis A	✓ <b>Inactivated Poliovirus</b> —Protects against polio
✓ <b>Human Papillomavirus</b> —Protects against cervical cancer	✓ <b>Pneumococcal Polysaccharide</b> —Protects against pneumococcal disease	✓ <b>Measles, Mumps, and Rubella</b> —Protects against measles, mumps, and rubella
✓ <b>Influenza</b> —Helps protect against influenza (flu)		✓ <b>Varicella</b> —Protects against chickenpox

Please contact your child's healthcare provider soon to discuss how your child can be protected against pertussis and hepatitis A.

Vaccines are not only for children. **Here's what you can do to help protect yourself.**

**Adults should consider vaccination for pertussis:**

- If aged 19-64, adults should receive a single dose of Tdap to replace the next scheduled dose of tetanus and diphtheria toxoids vaccine for booster immunization against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis if they received their last Td dose  $\geq 10$  years earlier and have not previously received a Tdap vaccine
- Adults who have or anticipate close contact with an infant aged  $< 12$  months should receive a single dose of Tdap to reduce the risk for transmitting pertussis

**Adults should also consider vaccination against hepatitis A if they have certain risk factors, including:**

- Travel in areas of the world where hepatitis A is common
- Have close, personal contact with an infected person
- Are exposed through food and waterborne outbreaks
- Work in daycare or have contact with daycare children or employees

For a healthy school,

School Nurse

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