Preventive Care Tips: Adolescent Immunizations: MCV4

Vaccines aren’t just for babies. As children get older, the protection provided by some of the vaccines given during childhood can begin to wear off. Older children can also develop risks for certain infections as they enter the preteen and teen years.

The preteen and teen vaccines not only help protect them, but also their friends, community and family members. There are four vaccines recommended for preteens and teens. All children should get a flu vaccine every year, and the three other vaccines should be given starting when children are 11 to 12 years old.

Which Vaccines Do Preteens and Teens Need?

- Tdap
- Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4)
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine
- Influenza (flu) vaccine

More about meningococcal disease and the MCV4 vaccine:

Meningococcal meningitis is inflammation of the lining around the brain and spinal cord that is caused by a very serious bacterial infection. This infection can lead to brain damage, hearing loss, learning disabilities, and even death. In addition to death, other types of meningococcal disease can lead to loss of an arm or leg.

Meningococcus bacteria are spread through the exchange of respiratory and throat secretions (from coughing or kissing). Although it can be very serious, meningococcal disease can be treated with antibiotics that can prevent severe illness and reduce the spread of infection from person to person. Quick medical attention is extremely important if meningococcal disease is suspected.

The meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4) helps prevent meningococcal disease and it can prevent two of the three most common disease-causing strains. Meningococcal meningitis can become deadly in 48 hours or less. Even with treatment, people die in about 10% of cases. About 20% of survivors of meningococcal disease have a long-term disability such as deafness, brain damage, or an amputated arm or leg. Preteens should receive this vaccine at age 11 or 12 and then get a booster at age 16. Teens who received MCV4 for the first time when they are 13 through 15 years old will need a one-time booster dose when they are 16 through 18 years old. If a teen missed getting the vaccine altogether, they should ask their doctor about getting it now, especially if they are about to move into a college dorm or military barracks.