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Preschool to College Age

Getting all of the recommended vaccines is one of the most important things a parent can do to protect their child's health, especially when they are in a setting like a school or a child care center where disease outbreaks can occur. Whether it's a baby starting at a new child care facility, a toddler heading to preschool, a student going back to elementary, middle or high school – or even a college freshman – parents should check their child's vaccine records.

When parents are preparing to send their child off to day care, school or college, it's the perfect time to check if he or she is up to date on recommended vaccines.

Child care facilities, preschool programs, schools and colleges are highly susceptible to outbreaks of infectious diseases. Children can easily transmit illnesses to one another due to poor hand washing, uncovered coughs, dense populations and other factors. When children aren't vaccinated, they are at increased risk for disease and can spread disease to others in their classrooms and communities. This includes babies too young to be fully vaccinated and people with weakened immune systems due to cancer or other health conditions.

Different states may require children who are entering child care or school to be vaccinated against certain diseases. Colleges and universities may have their own requirements, especially for students living in a dormitory. Now is the time for parents to check with their child's doctor, school or the local health department to learn about the state requirements.

Follow the immunization schedule to provide your child with the best protection, and keep your child's vaccine records current.

- Between the time your child is born and when they go off to college, they'll get vaccines to protect against a number of serious diseases.
- Make sure that you provide your child care facility with updated vaccine records each time you visit the doctor to get another important dose of a vaccine.
- Some children at your child care center may be too young for certain vaccines, and are therefore vulnerable to diseases. By keeping your

- children up to date on vaccines, you'll be protecting their younger classmates as well. You will also be helping to protect people in your community with weakened immune systems, such as some people with cancer and transplant recipients, who are also at higher risk of disease.
- Preteens and teens are at risk for diseases like meningitis and HPV cancers and need the protection of vaccines to keep them healthy and in school.
 - Vaccines are recommended for preteens and teens because:
 - Some of the childhood vaccines wear off over time, so adolescents need shots to stay protected from serious diseases like tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough).
 - As children get older, they are at greater risk of getting certain diseases like meningitis, septicemia, and HPV-related cancers. Specific vaccines, like HPV, should be given during the preteen (11 to 12) years because they work better at that age.
 - Vaccines not only protect your preteens and teens from serious diseases. They also protect siblings, friends and the people who care for them, like parents or grandparents.
 - Even healthy college students can get sick from vaccine-preventable diseases. Protection from vaccines received during childhood can wear off with time, and college students may also be at risk for other vaccine-preventable diseases like meningitis.

Many vaccine-preventable diseases can easily spread in child care and school settings.

- Schools are a prime venue for transmitting vaccine-preventable diseases, and school-age children can further spread disease to their families and others with whom they come in contact. For example, they can spread disease to vulnerable newborns too young to have received the maximum protection from the recommended doses of vaccines, or people with weakened immune systems, such as some people with cancer and transplant recipients who are also at higher risk of disease.
- From January 1 to June 26, 2015, 178 people in the United States have been reported to have measles. Measles is very contagious. It can spread through the air when people with measles cough or sneeze. It is so contagious that if one person has it, nine out of 10 people around him or her will also become infected if they are not protected. An infected person can spread measles to others even before knowing he or she has measles – up to four days before the telltale measles rash appears.

Vaccines are among the safest and most cost-effective ways to prevent disease. Protecting your children from preventable diseases will help keep them healthy and in school.

- When a child comes down with a disease such as whooping cough, chickenpox or the flu, he or she may miss a lot of school while recovering – and somebody will need to stay home to provide care and make trips to the doctor.
- If you haven't already, check your child's immunization record and schedule a visit to their physician or clinic. Doing so now will avoid a potential last minute rush and will help make sure there are no surprises on the first day of school.
- Most schools require children to be up to date on vaccinations before enrolling or starting school in order to protect the health of all students. If you are unsure of your state's school immunization requirements, check with your child's doctor, school, child care provider, college health center, or local health department.

Vaccines are recommended throughout our lives. Young adults need vaccines too, especially when they are college bound.

- The need for vaccination does not end in childhood. Vaccines are recommended throughout our lives based on age, lifestyle, occupation, travel locations, medical conditions, and previous vaccination history.
- Even healthy young adults can get sick from vaccine-preventable diseases. Protection from vaccines you received during childhood can wear off with time, and you may also be at risk for other vaccine-preventable diseases.
- You can send your kids off to college protected from serious diseases by making sure they've received all the vaccines recommended for them. Far too few adults are receiving the recommended vaccines, leaving themselves and their loved ones unnecessarily vulnerable to serious diseases.

Talk to your child's doctor or other health care professional to make sure your children get the vaccinations they need when they need them.

- Take advantage of any visit to the doctor – checkups, sick visits, even physicals for sports or college – to ask the doctor about what vaccinations your child needs.
- Families who need help paying for childhood vaccines should ask their health care provider about the Vaccines for Children program, which

provides vaccines at no cost to eligible children who do not otherwise have access to immunization.