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# Indian Health Service Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: (301) 443-3593, FAX (301) 443-0507

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## **CDC and IHS Urge American Indian and Alaska Native Parents to Protect Preteens with Recommended Vaccines** Campaign urges routine check-ups for 11- and 12-year-olds

As children approach their teen years, parents often worry about how to protect them from new risks and potential dangers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is partnering with the Indian Health Service to launch a campaign informing American Indian and Alaska Native parents and other caregivers about the importance of a preteen medical check-up and preteen vaccines.

Research shows that preteens generally do not get preventive health care, visiting the doctor only when they are sick. One goal of this campaign is to encourage parents to take their preteens in for an 11- or 12-year-old check-up, which is a comprehensive, preventive health exam. During the check-up, the doctor takes a complete medical history, screens for diseases like diabetes, discusses puberty and other issues such as how to stay healthy and avoid substance abuse, and ensures that immunizations are up to date.

"Many parents may not be aware that there are vaccines that preteens need to protect them against potentially serious diseases, including meningitis, pertussis, influenza, and the virus that causes cervical cancer," said Dr. Anne Schuchat, director of CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. "Vaccinations play an important role in protecting your child's health. But they do more than protect children. By ensuring you and your family receive recommended vaccines, you help to prevent the spread of disease and protect the health of the community."

Three vaccines are specifically recommended for the preteen years: MCV4, which prevents some types of meningitis and its complications; Tdap, which is a booster against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis or "whooping cough;" and for girls, the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, which protects against the types of HPV that most commonly cause cervical cancer. Annual seasonal flu shots and vaccination against H1N1 influenza are also recommended for preteens, just as they are for younger children starting at age 6 months, and for older children, through age 18.

Preteen vaccine recommendations are supported by the CDC, IHS, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the Society for Adolescent Medicine.

"There is a common perception that check-ups are only for infants, but this isn't true," said Dr. Michael Bartholomew, a member of the Kiowa Tribe and chief of pediatrics at the Fort Defiance Indian Hospital in Arizona. "Eleven- and 12-year-olds also need a check-up to ensure that they stay healthy as they enter their adolescent years."

CDC and IHS have developed posters and flyers to educate parents about the preteen check-up and preteen vaccines, which can be ordered or downloaded from the campaign Web site at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/preteen/aian](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/preteen/aian). These materials were created with input from American Indian and Alaska Native parents in the Southwest and the Pacific Northwest.

Other campaign activities include outreach to American Indian and Alaska Native media, partnerships with American Indian and Alaska Native organizations that reach parents and healthcare providers, and a community-based education project in New Mexico.



NOTICE TO EDITORS: For additional information on this subject, please contact the IHS public affairs office at 301-443-3593. Additional information about the IHS is available on the IHS website at <http://www.ihs.gov>.

