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Indiana State Department of Health

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Just one shot could save a teen's life.

Immunizations shouldn't stop after childhood. It's important for teens and their parents to know what vaccines they should be getting before they graduate from high school, including the meningococcal and hepatitis B vaccines. In fact, a new state law that became effective July 2005 requires the hepatitis B vaccine for Hoosier high school freshmen and seniors.

All Hoosier teens, but especially those going on to college, are at risk for contracting potentially serious illnesses like meningococcal meningitis and hepatitis B.

According to the 2003 National Health Interview Survey, only 52.3 percent of adolescents aged 13 to 15 had received the recommended three doses of the hepatitis B vaccine, and only 29.5 percent had received a tetanus booster.

The Indiana State Department of Health is participating in the Vaccinate Before You Graduate educational campaign in cooperation with the Indiana Immunization Coalition. The purpose of the campaign is to increase adolescent immunizations statewide by educating teenagers and their parents about the risks of vaccine-preventable diseases and the benefits of getting immunized.

As part of that initiative, we recommend that adolescents receive the following immunizations before they graduate from high school:

- Meningococcal vaccine
- Hepatitis b
- Influenza (if at high risk)
- Tetanus-diphtheria and pertussis (TdaP)
- Varicella (chickenpox, if needed)

It is important to encourage teens to take advantage of these safe and effective vaccines. Diseases like meningococcal meningitis and hepatitis B are not common, but when they do occur, they can have devastating effects.

Nearly 16 percent of the 19 cases of meningococcal meningitis in Indiana in 2005 were among children 10 to 19 years of age. Approximately 3.5 percent of the 58 new cases of hepatitis B in Indiana in 2004 were in adolescents.

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As part of our efforts to improve immunization rates in Indiana, I'm excited to report that Indiana will be one of the first states in the nation to go live with a new national vaccine distribution system. Once the system goes live, Indiana will begin getting all of its vaccines from a distribution center on the East Coast. With the new system, instead of each state having its own vaccine distribution system, there will be just two distribution centers in the United States for all vaccines; one in the West and one in the East. I'm pleased that Indiana has been chosen to launch this new system, which should improve our ability to get vaccines to Hoosiers in a timely and effective manner.

Immunizations are one of public health's greatest triumphs. The fact that vaccinations can prevent serious illness or even the death of a teen makes it vital that everyone in Indiana know what vaccines they should have. We at the Indiana State Department of Health and the Indiana Immunization Coalition are dedicated to ensuring that every Hoosier has access to the immunizations they need. The good health of our youngest citizens is our greatest asset.

For a healthier tomorrow,

Judy Monroe, M.D.
State Health Commissioner

