



For Immediate Release:

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Time to Vaccinate Your Preteen Pre-Teen Vaccine Week is January 18-24

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has proclaimed January 18-24, 2009 Preteen Vaccine Week. This annual statewide awareness campaign is designed to highlight the benefits of immunizations and regular visits to a doctor for children between 11 and 12 years of age. There are more than 313,000 preteens between the ages of 11 and 12 living in Los Angeles County.

“High vaccine rates for infants and older children have virtually eliminated many vaccine-preventable diseases that once caused serious illness and even death for our youth,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “We encourage parents to help their preteens start the year off on a healthy course by scheduling a wellness visit with their child’s doctor. Parents can discuss immunizations with the doctor, and gain tools to help encourage healthy habits such as eating a nutritious diet and exercising every day.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Society for Adolescent Medicine, and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that 11- and 12-year-olds receive:

- Meningococcal vaccine (MCV4): to protect against certain serious types of bacterial meningitis and other related infections,
- Tdap booster: to prevent tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough),
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine: to protect girls against cervical cancer,
- A second chickenpox vaccine (unless they have received 2 doses as a child or have had chickenpox),
- An annual flu vaccine.

Many preteens are not up-to-date on recommended immunizations, leaving them vulnerable to serious illnesses that could otherwise be prevented. Meningococcal infection, which can rapidly progress to a severe blood infection or meningitis, is fatal in about 10% of infected teens and causes long-term disability for another 15%. Preteens may also spread vaccine-preventable diseases such as meningitis or whooping cough to those who are at greatest risk for severe complications. In 2007, only 32.4% of teens 13 through 17 years of age in the U.S. had received the MCV4 vaccine to prevent meningococcal infection, and only 30.4% of those in the same age group had received the Tdap vaccine to protect against whooping cough.

“It is not enough to hope that your preteens will be safe from these diseases because other students or adults they may come into contact with may have been vaccinated. Every child should be protected by receiving these recommended immunizations,” said Dr. Fielding.

Several events will be held throughout the county with partners such as the Immunization Coalition of Los Angeles County (ICLAC) and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) District Nursing Division.

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One such event will be held on January 14, where students at John Muir Middle School will learn about diseases and the vaccines that prevent them through interactive games. This school was selected as the 2009 campaign site by LAUSD in order to boost its immunization coverage level, which has traditionally been low.

“Events such as those at John Muir Middle School are designed to help preteens make the best decisions about their health, including immunizations,” said Marlene Lugg, DrPH, co-chair of the Immunization Coalition of Los Angeles County. “This is also a great opportunity to connect families with low or no-cost immunizations. We are pleased to partner with LAUSD in providing free immunizations to students this month as part of this valuable campaign.”

Events in celebration of Preteen Vaccine Week include:

- January 21 at 4:00 p.m.: An interactive preteen immunization educational session for preteens and parents will be held at the Norwood Library in El Monte. Sponsored by LA County Public Health in partnership with the Norwood Library. Contact Ana Garcia, Children’s Librarian at the Norwood Library, at (626) 443-3148 or agarcia@library.lacounty.gov.
- January 28 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.: A panel titled “Innovative Strategies to Increase Adolescent Immunization Rates” will be held at the California Endowment’s Center for Healthy Communities. Hosted by ICLAC. Contact Wendy Berger at wberger@ph.lacounty.gov or 213-351-7800 to register.
- January 28 and 29: Onsite vaccination clinics will be held for students at John Muir Middle School to provide free recommended vaccines to preteens. This event is hosted by LAUSD and ICLAC.

For more information on vaccines, including recommendations for young children, preteens, teens, and adults, please visit the following websites:

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Immunization Program: www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/spec-grps/preteens-adol.htm
- California Department of Public Health Preteen Vaccine Sites: www.mybestshot.org or www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Pages/PreteenVaccines.aspx

Los Angeles County residents are encouraged to contact their regular healthcare provider to arrange for recommended vaccinations. Those who do not have a regular healthcare provider or insurance coverage for vaccines may be eligible for reduced-cost or no-cost vaccines. Please call the LA County Information Line at 2-1-1 or visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip for referrals to providers and community sites offering immunizations at no-charge or at a reduced-charge.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 4,000 employees and an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do, please visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov.