Immunization Answers for Parents

Once our kids get into high school and college, we tend to worry about car wrecks and sports injuries, not immunizations and diseases. But, people in all age groups need to be protected from infections. One of the most effective ways to protect the older teens and young adults in the family is through immunization.

What immunizations do my older children need?
If they’re between the ages of 13 and 18, these are the immunizations they should’ve had at some point, or should get if they’ve never had them:

- hepatitis B vaccine
- tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis (Tdap) vaccine
- inactivated polio vaccine (<18 years of age)
- seasonal influenza (flu) vaccine
- varicella (chickenpox) vaccine
- hepatitis A vaccine
- human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine
- meningococcal vaccine
- measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine

If they’re between the ages of 19 and 26, these are the immunizations they should’ve had at some point, or should get if they’ve never had them:

- seasonal influenza (flu) vaccine
- tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis (Tdap) vaccine
- varicella (chickenpox) vaccine
- human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine
- measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine

**Big Note:** There are some immunizations that only certain groups of people need. Ask your teens’/young adults’ healthcare providers which immunizations they should get to ensure that they are fully protected.
**When should my older kids be immunized?**

If you’re not sure which immunizations your older offspring (because calling them "children" can infect them with a severe case of eye-rolling) have had, contact their provider and ask. If the pediatrician is no longer the primary, make sure all immunization records are with the current provider.

You may find that schools, workplaces, or countries may have immunization requirements. Some vaccines require a period of time before one is fully protected, so start the process six months in advance, if you can.

**What are the risks to vaccination?**

Some people will be sore or have a red spot where the vaccine was given. A few people even faint after getting a shot. It’s best to stay seated during the shot and for several minutes afterward. The vaccines we have today undergo rigorous testing and are safe and effective. Serious side effects are rare. Make sure the provider knows of any allergies your older child has, as a different vaccine may be used based on that information.

**Where can my older child find vaccines and how do we pay for them?**

The provider might stock vaccines and if not, will be able to refer your older child to the appropriate place for vaccination.

If your older child doesn’t have a regular provider, there are [HRSA health centers](https://www.hrsa.gov) around that can help, and the [state health department](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/) will be able to answer questions about vaccine availability, as well as provide referrals to travel clinics if your older child is leaving the country.

If your older child has his or her own private health insurance, they’re likely to be covered under that insurance. Or, if they’re on your insurance, then they’re probably covered.

[Medicare](https://www.medicare.gov) and [Medicaid](https://www.medicaid.gov) pay for some vaccines, as does the military.

It is harder to find help in paying for vaccines if you’re uninsured and over the age of 18. We all hope the Affordable Care Act will cover those in need of preventive medicine.

**What if I have more questions?**

For specific questions about your older son or daughter, it’s best to ask your offspring’s provider.

For general questions, please visit us at [www.pkids.org/YourChoice](http://www.pkids.org/YourChoice).