

Immunizations are not just for kids: Illinois Department of Public Health celebrates National Immunization Awareness Month

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SPRINGFIELD – Many parents are preparing their children to head back to school, which includes making sure they have all their needed immunizations. And while immunization is one of the most important things parents can do to protect their children from serious diseases, during National Immunization Awareness Month this August, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) would also like to remind those parents and others that immunizations are important for people of all ages.

“The need for vaccines does not end in childhood. Immunizations are recommended throughout our lives based on age, lifestyle, occupation, travel destinations, medical conditions, and vaccines received in the past,” said IDPH Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “Immunization not only protects the person receiving the vaccine, but also helps prevent the spread of disease, especially to those who are most vulnerable, such as infants, the elderly, and those with chronic conditions and weakened immune systems. I encourage all adults to check their immunization status during National Immunization Awareness Month and talk with their health care provider.”

All adults, including pregnant women, should get the influenza (flu) vaccine each year to protect against seasonal flu. Every adult should have one dose of Tdap vaccine (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis or whooping cough) if they did not get Tdap as a teen, and then get the Td (tetanus and diphtheria) booster vaccine every 10 years. In addition, pregnant women are recommended to get the Tdap vaccine each time they are pregnant, preferably at 27 through 36 weeks.

Adults 60 years and older are recommended to receive the shingles vaccine and adults 65 and older are recommended to receive one or more pneumococcal vaccines. Some adults younger than 65 years with certain high-risk conditions are also recommended to receive one or more pneumococcal vaccinations. Adults may need other vaccines – such as hepatitis A, hepatitis B and HPV.

Changes to school immunization requirements for the 2016-2017 school year require all kindergartners to show proof of four polio immunizations. Additionally, students entering all grades except three, five, and 12 must show proof of two doses of varicella, and students entering grades six, seven, and 12 are required to be immunized for meningococcal.

The State of Illinois requires vaccinations to protect children from a variety of diseases before they can enter school. For school entrance, students must show proof of diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, haemophilus influenza type b, hepatitis b, and varicella, as well as pneumococcal and now meningococcal (depending on age) vaccinations. For more information about immunizations, including [vaccination schedules](http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/prevention-wellness/immunization) for infants, children, teens and adults, visit <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/prevention-wellness/immunization>.

IDPH offers additional immunization information on its [website](#). For parents who may not be able to afford immunizations, the Vaccines for Children program provides vaccines at no cost to children from low-income families. For information, call (312) 746-6050 in Chicago or (217) 785-1455 for the rest of the state.