



# News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Department of Public Health

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## **Immunizing Your Adolescent Is a Must for Back to School**

While making your family's back-to-school checklist, don't forget to make sure your preteens and teenagers are current on their vaccinations. The Cumberland County Department of Public Health has an Immunization Clinic open Monday through Friday from 8 to 5 p.m. with extended hours until 7 p.m. the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. Walk-ins are welcome.

"Vaccines are one of the greatest public health achievements, leading to dramatic declines in cases of infectious diseases and saving lives," said Acting State Health Director, Dr. Kelly Kimple. "Vaccines are a critical component in the commitment to the health of our children, ourselves and our communities."

As children move into adolescence, they are more susceptible to certain diseases, making it more important to keep immunizations current. For preteens, ages 11-12, there are four recommended vaccines, some of which are required for school entry in North Carolina:

- Meningococcal Conjugate Vaccine (MCV4) protects against some of the bacteria that cause meningococcal disease.
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine helps protect girls and boys from HPV infection and cancers caused by HPV.
- Tdap vaccine protects against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough).
- Influenza (flu) vaccine is recommended every year for all children ages 11-12, even healthy kids.

"Vaccinations protect children, as well as teens from serious illness and complications of vaccine-preventable diseases," said Health Department Public Health Nurse Supervisor Pamela James, RN MSN. "Teen immune systems are not prepared to fight every infection because of fading immunity and that makes them more susceptible to certain infections as well as a lack of exposure to diseases that are spread through intimate contact, like human papillomavirus."

Immunizations continue through the teen years. A booster dose of MCV4 is needed at age 16 to maintain protection against bacteria that can cause meningococcal disease. Depending on risk factors, some teens may need a serogroup B meningococcal vaccine as well. Check with your pediatrician or primary care physician about which vaccines your teenager should have.

"It's easy to keep your adolescent immunized," said Dr. Scott St. Clair, President of the NC Pediatric Society. "You can use any health care visit, including for sports or camp physicals, checkups and sick visits to have your preteen or teen vaccinated. We suggest keeping a conversation open with your health care professional to know the what and when of your adolescent immunizations."

The North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians, the NC Pediatric Society and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Public Health are partnering to raise awareness to North Carolinians of all ages, but especially adolescents, to protect themselves from certain vaccine-preventable diseases. This effort aligns with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention designating August each year as National Immunization Awareness Month focusing on the importance of vaccines for people of all ages.

Get more information and learn about the required North Carolina immunization schedule at [www.immunize.nc.gov/schools/k-12.htm](http://www.immunize.nc.gov/schools/k-12.htm).

For more information about the Cumberland County Immunization Clinic, call 910-433-3633.

*If you would like more information about the Cumberland County Department of Public Health's programs and services, health-related data, or community resources, please call 910-433-3600 or visit with someone at the information desk, or visit our website at [co.cumberland.nc.us/health.aspx#](http://co.cumberland.nc.us/health.aspx#). Comments are welcome and can be submitted on our website at [co.cumberland.nc.us/health/comment\\_form.aspx](http://co.cumberland.nc.us/health/comment_form.aspx). The Health Department is located at 1235 Ramsey St. in Fayetteville.*

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