

Public Health wants you to know about Vaccine Preventable Diseases



A Message From Public Health.....

You may not be there to hover over every snuffle, but there are things you can do to help your college student stay safe and healthy, starting with good preventive care. Vaccines protect adolescents against serious diseases.

Anyone living in crowded, communal living conditions - dorms, for example, as well as fraternities and sororities - are at significantly higher risk for vaccine preventable diseases than the general population. Add in unhealthy life styles - lack of sleep, unbalanced nutrition, exposure to alcohol and second hand smoke - and the risks rise. Teens who live in dorms are six times more likely to contract the virulent disease than teens in the general population.

Immunizations play a vital role in decreasing the risk of outbreaks or epidemics of vaccine preventable diseases on university campuses across the state.

Influenza Vaccine

Influenza ("flu") is a contagious disease. It is caused by the influenza virus, which can be spread by coughing, sneezing, or nasal secretions. Anyone can get influenza. For most people, it lasts only a few days. It can cause fever, sore throat, chills, fatigue, cough, headache, and muscle aches. Influenza can lead to pneumonia and can be dangerous for people with heart or breathing conditions. On average, in the United States 226,000 people are hospitalized every year because of influenza and 36,000 die. Influenza vaccine can prevent influenza.

The **single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated** each year, but good health habits like covering your cough and washing your hands often can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu.

Meningococcal Vaccine

Meningococcal meningitis is a fast moving, deadly bug that kills 10% to 13% of its victims within a matter of hours or days, and leaves severe repercussions - amputation, brain damage or deafness - for up to 20% of the patients who survive. The frustrating thing is that antibiotics can knock out the disease, but the early symptoms are so general - fever, malaise, rash and a stiff neck - most victims don't even realize they have it until they are very sick.

Meningococcal germs can potentially be spread by coughing, kissing or by sharing a water bottle or fork. It can infect the blood, or the fluid in the spinal cord or around the brain, and symptoms can emerge in a matter of hours or days. And it spreads so quickly, a patient can die in a few hours, even with medical care. It's that speed that alarms doctors and university officials. Only 125 college students contract the disease - and five to 15 die - each year from the disease. Up to 80% of those cases could have been avoided with the vaccine currently recommended.

Getting immunized is a lifelong, life-protecting job. Talk to your doctor, nurse, or clinic to find out whether you have all the immunizations you need.

The Immunization Reminder Information System (IRIS) of Idaho will keep a record of all your child's immunizations. Parents can sign up at their doctor's or Health Department office so the child's immunization record will never be lost.

Before you start college, make sure you are up-to-date on all your immunizations:

- Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Acellular Pertussis (Tdap)
- Pneumococcal
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Inactivated Poliovirus
- Measles, Mumps, and Rubella
- Varicella.
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

College freshmen living in dorms or close living quarters are at a higher risk for meningitis. There is a vaccine to protect against the disease.

Look for more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov

American College Health Association: www.acha.org/info_resources

Ask your health care provider or student health service!