Protect Your Child and Prepare for 7th Grade Now

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department is promoting Preteen Vaccine Week, February 12-18, 2012 as a statewide effort to remind families of preteens about recommended and required immunizations for 11 and 12 year olds.

“It’s not too early to protect your child, “said Dr. Charity Thoman, Deputy Health Officer for the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department. “ As the current year is wrapping up, I encourage families of preteens to schedule a preteen doctor visit and get the shots they need to stay healthy and meet the school entry requirement.”

For the 2012-13 school year and beyond, all incoming 7th graders must provide proof of having immunization against whooping cough (Tdap) before starting school. In light of California’s recent whooping cough (also known as pertussis) epidemic, there is no reason to wait for the new school year. Health professionals encourage parents to have their children vaccinated with Tdap now in order to protect them against whooping cough and to meet the school requirement.

“Unlike the previous school year, there is no grace period in the current law,” reminds Dr. Thoman. “All incoming 7th graders will need to meet the Tdap requirement before starting school. Students who have not met the requirement will be sent back home until they do.”

Immunity received from childhood vaccines can wear off overtime, exposing a child to serious diseases that could easily spread, leading to missed weeks of school or worse. Besides Tdap there are other immunizations that are recommended for this age group, including the meningococcal vaccine, a second chickenpox shot (if they never had chickenpox disease), and the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine series. Everyone age six months and older should get an annual flu vaccine.

“Protecting the health of California’s youth is one of our most urgent priorities,” said Dr. Thoman “Preteen Vaccine Week is part of our commitment to ensuring our kids receive all the benefits immunizations can provide.”

For more information, please visit www.ShotsforSchool.org or call the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Immunization Program at (805) 346-8420.

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