Public Health Officials Urge Vaccinations for Preteens

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department is promoting the statewide Preteen Vaccine Week Campaign on February 9-15, 2014 to remind families of preteens about recommended immunizations for 11 and 12-year olds.

A focus of Preteen Vaccine Week 2014 is increasing immunization against Human Papillomavirus (HPV). HPV infections can lead to cervical cancer and other cancers in both sexes.

Despite its effectiveness, HPV vaccination rates remain low. A recent Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) survey indicated that HPV vaccination rates in girls aged 13-17 years failed to increase between 2011 and 2012; only 36% in California have received the complete series of three doses. Health care professionals and families need to work together to better protect preteens from HPV and the cancers it causes later in life.

Parents of preteens are urged to schedule a check-up with their child’s doctor to make sure their immunizations are up-to-date. The doctor will recommend several vaccines, including meningococcal vaccine, a second chickenpox shot, an annual flu vaccine and a whooping cough booster shot, Tdap, to protect them against whooping cough. All incoming 7th graders are required to provide proof of immunization against whooping cough before starting school.

Under the Affordable Care Act all new health plans will now be required to cover the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended vaccines for adults and children of all ages, without charging a deductible, copayment or coinsurance. If a child does not have health insurance, or is only partially insured, your health care provider or the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Immunization Program can provide information about the Vaccines for Children Program (VFC), which provides no- or low-cost vaccines.

For more information, please visit www.shotsforschool.org or www.sbcphd.org/iz.

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