



2008 Immunization Issue Brief

Adolescent Immunizations

January 25, 2008

Immunizations are one of the most cost-effective preventive measures available. Vaccines are one of the few medicines that prevent a disease from occurring in the first place, rather than attempting a cure after the fact. Vaccine-preventable diseases have a costly impact on health care and businesses in West Virginia - - through increased doctor's visits, hospitalizations and premature deaths. Sick children can also cause parents to lose time from work. For example:

- √ For every \$1 spent on MMR vaccine, more than \$21 is saved in direct and medical care costs
- √ For every \$1 spent on DTaP vaccine, \$24 is saved

Why do adolescents need immunizations? Promoting the health and safety of adolescents is of critical importance to the future of West Virginia. Adolescence represents a unique period in the life cycle. No longer children and not yet adults, adolescents make significant choices about their health and develop attitudes and health practices that affect their current safety and well-being as well as influence their risk for future serious chronic diseases. Thus, adolescence represents an opportunity for encouraging healthy choices that will continue into adulthood.

In West Virginia, school immunization requirements have been an important part of the success of vaccinations. They have prevented outbreaks of disease by ensuring high rates of immunization coverage among our state's children upon entry to school. However, once these children reach adolescence, vaccination rates fall dramatically. Thus, providing the information needed to make the informed choice about receiving age-appropriate immunizations throughout their lifespan is one of the most effective preventative health habits that adolescents can develop. **By investing in adolescent health today, we invest in the workforce, parents and leaders of tomorrow.**

What is West Virginia doing to protect adolescents from vaccine-preventable diseases? The [WV Adolescent Immunization Project: Take Your Best Shot](#) combines legislatively appropriated funds with private funds raised through the Center for Rural Health Development's Healthy Futures initiative to increase the rate of immunizations in adolescents ages 11 to 21 years for vaccines recommended for adolescents by the Academy of Pediatrics and Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

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Take Your Best Shot's Goal. Prior to 2005 the only vaccine routinely recommended for adolescents was the tetanus and diphtheria toxoids (Td) booster. Since 2005, new vaccine recommendations for adolescents have occurred and more are likely

occur within the next few years. Thus, the WV Adolescent Immunization Project: Take Your Best Shot was developed to assist West Virginia in **leading the nation** in vaccinating our adolescents.

Adolescent Vaccines in Development. Between 2006 and 2015, new vaccines that will likely be targeted toward adolescents may become available to prevent infections from herpes simplex (HSV), cytomegalovirus (CMV), Chlamydia and group B streptococci. In 2006, a vaccine to prevent human papillomavirus (HPV), a cause of cervical cancer, which kills approximately 4,000 women per year, was introduced. By 2015, it is possible that vaccines against HIV and tuberculosis will be introduced; at least some of these will have the greatest benefit if administered to adolescents.

Numerous Vaccines, Limited Timeframe. While vaccines for adolescents are very effective, they do not come with the additional time required to educate adolescents, parents, health care providers and others about the importance of being vaccinated. Thus, the WV Adolescent Immunization Project: Take Your Best Shot was developed to assist with integrating the recommended and anticipated new vaccines into the delivery of the many other clinical preventive services recommended for adolescents.

For More Information

About Adolescent Immunizations, contact:

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Immunization Program**

www.cdc.gov/nip

**West Virginia Immunization Program
West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources**
(304) 558-2188 or (800) 642-3634 (in WV only)

www.wvdhhr.org/immunizations/

About "Take Your Best Shot", contact:

Center for Rural Health Development

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