

## September Health Journal

### Teens Need Vaccines Too

Many American teens may not get recommended vaccinations. A poll conducted by the University of Michigan's Children's Hospital found that at more than one third of parents did not know when their teen's next vaccine was due. This was from a study of 614 parents with at least one teenager. Half of those polled thought the doctor would notify them of the needed vaccines.

As children get older, well child appointments occur less often and health providers may not address vaccines during brief visits for sickness or injury. Many teenagers may be missing out on important vaccines simply because families aren't aware it is time for them.

Rates of certain teen vaccinations are well below public health standards. For example only 1/3 of teens have received the second dose of meningitis vaccine by age 17 and less than half of boys aged 13 to 17 have completed the HPV vaccine series, according to the CDC. The new vaccine for prevention of Meningitis B, a highly contagious and deadly form of meningitis, has not been widely received across the country, in spite of a television campaign educating parents.

A danger of under vaccination or non-vaccination is the threat of visitors to the United States who might be infected with an illness or return travelers who bring the diseases home with them. Many countries are experiencing outbreaks of common childhood diseases such as measles in European countries, polio in India and diphtheria in Brazil. These diseases are not common in the United States due to diligent vaccination of children. Unfortunately, under vaccinated children or children who have not been vaccinated are at risk of acquiring these diseases. These diseases can cause serious illness and even death.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention publishes a chart for children, teenagers and adults that list the vaccines necessary at each age and how many should be received. The vaccine schedule is designed to ensure that children receive vaccines at the optimal time to protect them from infectious diseases. The schedule is updated every year and changes range from the addition of a new vaccine to tweaks of current recommendations. For more information, visit the CDC's website at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines). To schedule a vaccine, contact Lisa Bohrer at 301-689-2909.