

**Louisiana Pharmacists Association**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Patients about Summer / Back to School  
Vaccines**

With summer quickly approaching, it's officially time to bring out the sunscreen and bathing suits for family vacations and getaways. As the summer months often involve balancing work and school related responsibilities with a much-needed break, we tend to create a check-list of tasks to accomplish before classes resume in the fall. One chore often overlooked, especially during the summer months, is staying up to date on vaccines! Even though we don't typically associate heat and sunshine with illness and ailments, immunizations are just as important for protection in the summer months as they are during flu season. Summer is the perfect time to beat the crowds to the doctor's office or your local pharmacy to ensure that you and your family have the necessary vaccines for the summer and prior to starting school in the fall.

Given that vaccine schedules vary based on age and patient-specific characteristics, we will discuss the recommended immunizations for some general patient populations. For children starting pre-kindergarten and elementary school, the second doses of both varicella and MMR vaccines are essential between the ages of 4 and 6 years old.<sup>1</sup> Children who are exposed to and contract chickenpox, also known as the varicella-zoster virus, are at an increased risk of developing shingles later in life due to the virus' ability to remain dormant in the body and reactivate. Therefore, ensuring that your child receives both doses of the varicella vaccine before the age of 6 greatly decreases their risk of developing both chickenpox and shingles. The MMR vaccine protects your child against the measles, mumps, and rubella viruses. These viruses are highly contractible and can result in serious long-term consequences, including heart problems, permanent brain damage and even death.<sup>2</sup> Due to the development of vaccines, rates of these highly transmissible diseases have decreased profoundly as compared to the pre-vaccine era, including a 99% reduction in number of measles and mumps cases.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the vaccinations mentioned above, an annual flu vaccine is recommended for all patients aged 6 months and older. Although August may

seem early for a flu shot, the CDC recommends receiving the vaccine soon after it becomes available each year, as early as the end of summer; however, anytime before the end of October is ideal! For patients receiving the flu vaccine for the first time, two doses (four weeks apart) are recommended for children aged 6 months to 8 years, while only one annual dose is recommended for all patients aged 9 years and older.<sup>4</sup>

Teens and preteens are highly susceptible to vaccine preventable diseases while attending camps during the summer months. Given the combination of large groups of campers and close living quarters, infection is easily spread if patients are not properly protected. For preteens aged 11-12 years old, three vaccines are vital: Tdap, HPV and meningococcal. The Tdap vaccine protects against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis. Although both tetanus and diphtheria are rare in the United States, rates of pertussis (also known as whooping cough) have been steadily increasing since the 1980s.<sup>5</sup> As it takes several months for newborns to develop effective immune systems, babies are at the greatest risk of contracting pertussis and are likely to experience complications of the disease, such as hospitalization and pneumonia.<sup>6</sup> The HPV vaccine, Gardasil-9, covers strains 6, 11, 16, 18, 31, 33, 45, 52 and 58 of the human papillomavirus.<sup>7</sup> HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States that can increase the risk of developing several cancers later in life, including cervical, penile or oropharyngeal cancer. The CDC now recommends a 2-dose series (5 months apart at minimum) for all boys and girls receiving the HPV vaccine before age 15, rather than the 3-dose series previously recommended which remains effective for all patients starting the vaccine series after age 15.<sup>1</sup> Meningitis is caused by meningococcal disease and until recently, this disease was thought to be caused mainly by strains A, C, W and Y; however, studies now show that strain B causes just as many cases.<sup>8</sup> All preteens should receive their first ACWY meningitis shot (Menactra or Menomune) between 11 and 12 years old and then a mandatory booster between the ages of 16 to 18, before starting college. The meningitis B vaccine is not currently mandatory before entering college, as it has recently been developed and research is still ongoing. However, to be fully protected against all five strains that most commonly cause this disease, the meningitis B vaccine may be recommended by your doctor or college/university. The two meningitis B vaccines currently available are Trumenba and Bexsero, and both require multiple doses for full protection. Although the meningococcal B vaccine is not currently required before starting college in Louisiana, be sure to check with the recruitment or admissions office if you or your child plans to attend an out-of-state university.

Given the recent rise in vaccine preventable diseases in our own state, keeping up with vaccination schedules is more important now than ever. As of March, there have been over 30 total reported cases of mumps in the state of Louisiana alone!<sup>9</sup> Given the nature of these highly contagious diseases/viruses, we advise students and parents to make sure all necessary immunizations are received prior to attending

summer activities and school in the fall. Staying up to date on vaccines protects yourself, your family, and people in your area who are unable to receive immunizations, including babies, pregnant women, elderly patients and those with weakened immune systems. Always remember: protect your community and boost your immunity!

This newsletter did not cover all currently recommended vaccinations for children and teens, and immunization schedules can vary greatly based on concurrent disease states and previous vaccine history. For additional information please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website for detailed vaccination schedules, including catch-up schedules, or speak with your physician or local pharmacist to determine the best summer vaccination schedule for you and your family.

### References:

- <sup>1</sup> "Child and Adolescent Schedule." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 06 Feb. 2017. Web. 01 Apr. 2017.
- <sup>2</sup> "MMR (Measles, Mumps, & Rubella) VIS." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 10 Jan. 2017. Web. 10 Apr. 2017.
- <sup>3</sup> "Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 15 Nov. 2016. Web. 10 Apr. 2017.
- <sup>4</sup> "Key Facts About Seasonal Flu Vaccine." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 31 Mar. 2017. Web. 31 Mar. 2017.
- <sup>5</sup> "Pertussis (Whooping Cough)" *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 27 Jun. 2016. Web. 13 Apr. 2017.
- <sup>6</sup> "Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis) VIS." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 18 Oct. 2016. Web. 02 Apr. 2017.
- <sup>7</sup> "GARDASIL®9 (Human Papillomavirus 9-valent Vaccine, Recombinant) for Health Care Professionals." *MerckVaccines.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Apr. 2017.
- <sup>8</sup> "Ask the Experts: Diseases & Vaccines." *Ask the Experts about Meningococcal ACWY Vaccine - CDC experts answer Q&As*. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 Apr. 2017.
- <sup>9</sup> "Mumps | Department of Health | State of Louisiana." *Mumps | Department of Health | State of Louisiana*. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 Apr. 2017.

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**The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Julie Fuselier or Phyllis Perron, LPA Co-Executive Directors at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at [www.louisianapharmacists.com](http://www.louisianapharmacists.com).**

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