



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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PRETEEN VACCINE WEEK STRESSES PREVENTION

State observance focuses on importance of preteen doctor visits and immunization

It's better to prevent disease than to have to treat it. Preteen Vaccine Week, a statewide observance set for January 21-27, 2007, is intended to raise awareness of the importance of preteen doctor visits and immunization in preventing diseases.

"Protecting the health of our preteens is so important," stated Nancy Bowen, M.D., County of San Diego Public Health Officer. "Preteen Vaccine Week is an opportune time to remind people about the importance of regular doctor visits during the preteen and adolescent years," she added.

The preteen doctor visit is an excellent opportunity for 11- and 12-year olds to get vaccines they need, including a Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis) booster, meningococcal vaccine and a second chickenpox shot (if they have never had chickenpox).

These diseases are still present in our community. There were 371 cases of pertussis reported in San Diego County in 2005, and some 20 percent of those were in children 10-14 years old. What's more, older children and adults who have pertussis can inadvertently spread it to babies too young to have been fully immunized against it. And in those babies, pertussis can result in hospitalization.

Meningococcal disease, although rare, can be devastating. Even if treated, at least 10 percent of the people who get meningococcal disease will die from it. And chickenpox, although thought of as a mild disease, can be particularly dangerous in adolescents. It can lead to severe skin infections, scars, pneumonia, brain damage or even death.

Locally, the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors is proclaiming Jan. 21-27, 2007 as Preteen Vaccine Week in San Diego County. There are plans to distribute educational materials through schools and libraries, as well as conduct an educational web event for physicians on adolescent immunizations.

Parents of preteens and adolescents are urged to check with their child's doctor or clinic to make sure the child's immunizations are up to date. One of the best ways to do that is to schedule a doctor visit for a general health checkup and to ask about immunizations when the appointment is made.

For more information about immunizations and vaccine-preventable diseases, please visit the website at www.sdiz.org.

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