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Off to College: Even Healthy Young Adults Need Vaccines
Vermont Celebrates National Immunization Awareness Month

Vaccines are not just for children. You need them throughout your life to stay healthy. That's because immunity from childhood diseases may wear off over time, and we may also be at risk for other vaccine-preventable diseases. Every year, thousands of adults in the U.S. suffer serious health problems, are hospitalized, or even die from diseases that could have been prevented by vaccinations.

To celebrate the importance of immunizations throughout life – and to help remind young adults that they need vaccines, too – the Vermont Department of Health is celebrating National Immunization Awareness Month throughout August.

“Getting vaccinated is an important action to take to protect against serious, sometimes life-threatening diseases,” said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. “And college prep means making sure you're up to date with your vaccines. Even healthy young adults need vaccines. Talk to your doctor about which vaccines you need.”

If you're sending a child off to college, make sure he or she is fully protected. The Affordable Care Act allows parents to keep children on their health insurance policy until age 26.

There are vaccines specifically recommended for college-age young adults: Everyone age 6 months and older should have a flu shot every year. And every adult should get the Tdap vaccine once, to protect against pertussis (whooping cough), and then a Td (tetanus, diphtheria) booster every 10 years.

HPV, the vaccine that protects against human papilloma virus, the cause of cervical cancer, other cancers and genital warts, is recommended for young women and men who have not already been vaccinated. Meningococcal vaccine is recommended for students who will be living in dorms and are at slightly increased risk for meningococcal disease compared with others of the same age.

Your need for other vaccines depends on factors such as your childhood vaccination history, travel plans, personal health status and risks.

To find out what vaccines are right for you, visit the Health Department's website at:
<http://healthvermont.gov/hc/imm/public.aspx>.

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