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DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
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Off to College: Even Healthy Young Adults Need Vaccines

LANSING – In recognition of National Immunization Awareness Month, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) is urging young adults to get vaccinated against serious diseases such as meningitis, whooping cough, human papillomavirus or HPV, and influenza to name a few. Getting vaccinated is a simple step that can help keep young adults healthy before they head off to college or other training programs.

“Vaccines aren’t just for children,” said Dr. Matthew Davis, Chief Medical Executive at the MDCH. “Even healthy teens and young adults can benefit from vaccines that protect against serious, life-threatening diseases. Living and studying in dorms and classrooms with lots of other people, and spending a lot of time at social or sports events make diseases easy to spread in college and university settings.”

College students have a unique risk due to lifestyle factors. Busy academic, work, and social calendars can contribute to stress, lack of sleep, unhealthy eating habits, and not exercising regularly. All of these factors can weaken the immune system, making young people more vulnerable to diseases during their college years. Getting sick would add to this stress through missed classes, social functions, and work. Simply put, college students can’t afford to get sick.

College students, can, on the other hand, afford to get all of the recommended vaccines. The Affordable Care Act allows parents to keep adult children on their health insurance policy until age 26. Most insurance plans cover the cost of all recommended vaccines.

If your child is heading off to a college or a training program in the next few weeks, include a doctor’s visit on your “to do” list. Make sure your college-aged child – as well as all your family members – are up-to-date on all needed vaccines. It could save a life. To get vaccinated, contact your doctor, local pharmacy, student health center, local health department or visit <http://vaccine.healthmap.org>.

Personal stories about young adults who have been impacted by vaccine-preventable diseases are posted at: <http://shotbyshot.org/tag/young-adult/>. Keep your family healthy throughout the year by ensuring that everyone has received all recommended vaccines. For more information about vaccines and what is recommended, visit <http://www.vaccineinformation.org/>.

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