

Frequently Asked Questions: IZ Xtreme Campaign

1. What is the purpose of this vaccination campaign?

To protect your child against serious infections. Some new vaccines have recently been approved for use in the United States, aimed at preventing serious diseases in adolescents and young adults. Unlike other childhood vaccines, these new vaccines may not be given until the middle school years.

2. What diseases do the vaccines in the campaign prevent?

The IZ Xtreme campaign offers three new vaccines for preteens, protecting against five serious infections, along with immunization against seasonal influenza. The diseases are:

Meningococcal disease. A respiratory infection that causes potentially fatal blood poisoning or meningitis. Risk of serious invasive disease increases in adolescents and young adults.

Pertussis (whooping cough). A highly contagious infection that causes a prolonged cough in older children and adults. It can be fatal when transmitted to younger children. A booster vaccine is needed in the middle school years, as immunity from childhood vaccination is wearing off.

Diphtheria. An infection in the back of the throat that can cause airway obstruction and death.

Tetanus. An infection of wounds that produces a toxin causing painful muscle contractions.

Protection against tetanus has been combined with that for pertussis and diphtheria in the new Tdap booster vaccine. Tdap can be given if a tetanus booster has not been received within two years.

Human papillomavirus (HPV). The leading cause of cervical cancer in women, and the primary cause of genital warts. The new HPV vaccine is given only to females at this time.

Influenza (flu). A respiratory illness with epidemic potential that causes fever, headache, muscle aches and other symptoms. It can result in serious complications and death. A new nasal spray vaccine (FluMist) can be given to healthy persons aged 5 to 49 years to prevent the flu.

3. Are the vaccines effective?

Carefully monitored trials of these vaccines have shown that they are very effective in preventing the diseases they were designed to prevent. But parents should be aware that the meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4) does not protect against all causes of meningitis, including disease caused by serogroup B, the most common strain of meningococcus in North America. The HPV vaccine protects against four strains of the human papilloma virus, which collectively account for 70 percent of cervical cancers and 90 percent of genital warts. The vaccine does not protect against all strains that cause these diseases, and pap smear screening for cervical cancer will still be necessary when your daughter is an adult. The FluMist nasal spray vaccine is more than 80 % effective in preventing flu infection in healthy children, but like all flu vaccines it needs to be given annually before the start of the winter flu season.

4. Are the vaccines safe?

Yes. The vaccines used in this campaign have been extensively tested in large clinical trials prior to licensure, and recipients have since been monitored for adverse effects. In general, the vaccines are all well-tolerated with only mild, local reactions reported. For details on the risks associated with each vaccine, see the enclosed Vaccine Information Statements.

5. Can children safely receive multiple injections at the same time?

Yes. All the vaccines to be given in this campaign can be administered simultaneously without harmful effects. Our nurses are trained to vaccinate safely, with as little discomfort as possible.

6. Why conduct a school-based immunization campaign?

The benefits to your children and the wider community from immunizing preteens with these vaccines are so great that your Public Health Department wants to make the vaccines as widely available as possible. We recognize that children in this age group often lose contact with their usual health care provider, receiving medical care only episodically for acute problems. Vaccinating children at school is simple and convenient for parents, and it eliminates barriers such as cost and transportation. Parents are encouraged to speak with their health care providers about the vaccination campaign, and they are welcome to obtain the vaccines through their medical providers if they so choose. Even if they decide to vaccinate their children elsewhere, parents are urged to complete the pink consent form for the IZ Xtreme campaign and return it to their child's school.

7. Why target 6th and 7th graders for this campaign?

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices have determined that children in the 6th and 7th grades are the ideal population to receive these vaccines. The timing for the meningococcal vaccine coincides with the increased risk of infection that is coming during the teenage years. For Tdap, vaccinating at this time boosts immunity that is normally beginning to decline. The HPV vaccine is only effective when given prior to exposure, and cannot be used as a treatment after exposure has occurred. Giving it at this time, before the start of sexual activity, ensures that girls obtain maximum benefit from the vaccine. Flu vaccine would benefit children and adults in all age groups. It is being offered to your children in this campaign because it can be easily added to the menu of preteen vaccines being provided.

8. Does it cost anything for my child to participate?

No. The total retail value of the vaccines being offered exceeds \$565.00, but they will cost you nothing if you decide to participate. The vaccines are being provided to the county through the federal Vaccines for Children program, and your county Public Health Department is administering the program at no cost to you.

9. What if my child has a medical condition that precludes use of the FluMist?

If review of your child's medical history on page two of the pink consent form indicates that he/she is not a candidate for FluMist, your child will be given the traditional flu shot unless you indicate on page three of the consent form that you do not want your child to receive it.

10. If I choose not to have my child receive one of the vaccines, can he/she receive the other vaccines?

Yes. Your child will only receive the vaccines you have selected on page three of the pink consent form. You may choose some, all or none of the vaccines listed for your child. The decision is yours.

11. Who can I call if I have additional questions?

You can speak with your school district nurse, or you may call the Public Health Department in Placerville at (530) 621-6112 or in South Lake Tahoe at (530) 573-3157.