



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Just So Pediatrics Vaccinates for Life

National Infant immunization Week — April 23-30

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BRATTLEBORO – Pediatrician Val Rooney does a great impression of a whooping cough (pertussis) for any adolescent who doesn't want to get vaccinated against the highly contagious bacterial disease.

"It's a horrible cough, day and night," Rooney said. "It can be so severe and violent that patients can bruise or fracture a rib. They cough and cough and cough until they are out of breath, and then they whoop. I say to them: which would you rather do, cough like that for six straight weeks – bark and cough – or get your shot and prevent it?"

Her demonstration is almost always met with a rolled-up sleeve and waiting arm.

Dr. Rooney believes the main reason Just So Pediatrics has an 84 percent vaccination rate for their adolescent patients is their insistence on fully immunizing patients, and close coordination among the team of staff who review charts and encourage eligible patients to get the shots during office visits. Just So Pediatrics has the highest vaccination rate in the area.

"Studies show that scare tactics don't work, but explaining the consequences of not getting immunized does seem to work," Dr. Rooney said.

In addition to vaccines for 14 diseases required during early childhood, at age 11 to 12 another dose of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine is recommended, plus a Tdap booster shot to protect against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis. In addition, three doses of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) are recommended to protect against cervical cancer for women[1] <#_msocom_1> .

Meningococcal vaccine is recommended for all 11- to 12-year-olds, and for 13- to 18-year-olds who have not been previously vaccinated. A new booster dose at age 16 has just been recommended.

Meningitis is a bacterial disease that begins to be more common around age 15, and is most common among college freshmen, military recruits and others living in dorms or crowded conditions. Twenty percent of cases occur among adolescents and young people ages 14 to 24. The bacteria get into the bloodstream and can cause blood clots, which can lead to amputation of an arm or leg – or it can get into the spinal fluid and cause meningitis, deafness, brain damage or death.

Meningococcal vaccination rates nationally are at 54 percent, while Vermont's rate is 44 percent.

"Meningitis is a rare germ, but so serious and life-threatening, it's not worth taking the risk," Dr. Rooney said. "No vaccine is 100 percent effective, but these are diseases that are mostly avoidable if people do the right thing and get protected."

The Vermont Department of Health recommends that all children from birth through age 18 be vaccinated according to the schedule developed by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

Vaccinate for Life is a statewide effort to provide the most accurate information about the importance and safety of vaccines, and to protect both children and adults from vaccine-preventable diseases. If you have questions about vaccinations, ask your health care provider, check the Vermont Department of Health's website healthvermont.gov our new Facebook page '[Healthy Vermont Families](#)', follow us on [Twitter](#), or call our immunization program toll-free at 1-800-640-4374.

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