DATE

Dear Parents of Graduating Seniors:

Your child’s senior year is winding down, and students will soon start their new school year as college freshmen. As the excitement builds, it is natural for parents and teens to feel anxious about the changes ahead. Most colleges require shots before the first day of classes, so now is an opportune time to get your child vaccinated.

While it may seem impossible to protect our children from all dangers, one thing parents can do is protect their children from some serious diseases by getting them immunized. We’d like to encourage your young adult to do one more thing before graduating – **Get immunized against vaccine-preventable diseases!**

**Make sure your graduating senior is up-to-date on all his/her immunizations:**

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| **Recommended Vaccines** | **What this means for YOUR child** |
| Tdap  (tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough) | You may remember immunizing your child with Tdap before starting the 2011-12 school year or earlier. If your child missed this immunization, consider getting it now. Tdap is a tetanus booster that also protects against whooping cough – a disease than can lead to really bad coughing for weeks or even months. It’s especially dangerous for babies at home or in your community. For teens and adults, it may even break their ribs from coughing too hard! |
| Meningococcal | Meningococcal disease is spread by kissing, sharing drinks, or having close contact with others. This disease can be deadly and could cause your child to lose an arm, leg, his/her hearing or cause brain damage. The shot can protect them from several types of this serious infection. If your child missed the recommended booster shot at age 16 years, make sure they get it before they graduate. College students living in campus housing are at higher risk for this disease! |
| Flu | The annual flu vaccine is the best way to reduce the chances of getting flu and spreading it to others. Flu can send even healthy kids to the hospital; some may even die from flu. While everyone over 6 months of age should get vaccinated, it’s especially important for those with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease. |
| Human Papillomavirus  (HPV) | Did you know that more than half of all men and women will get infected with HPV at some point in their life? The HPV 3-shot series can protect your son or daughter from most common types of HPV known to cause throat and mouth, vaginal, vulvar, cervical, anal, and penile cancers later in life. |

Vaccines are safe and effective. The most common side-effect is soreness at the injection site. If you don’t have health insurance, check with your local health department about how to receive free or low-cost vaccines. You can look up the number of your local health department at <http://bit.do/immunization>. For more information on shots required for school, visit [ShotsForSchool.org](http://www.shotsforschool.org/).

**A message from your school nurse, the California School Nurses Organization and your Local Health Department**

California School Nurses Organization  
1225 8th Street, Suite #342  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Phone: 916-448-5752; Fax: 844-273-0846  
Email: csno@csno.org

