



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Alabama teens have low rate of HPV immunization, vaccination urged

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health has received data from a national survey of over 20,000 adolescents nationwide as part of the 2014 National Immunization Survey (NIS) Teen by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For Alabama, the survey revealed that the tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Tdap) rate was 88.6 percent, which is above the national average. Rates for meningitis coverage were at 71.6 percent, slightly below the national average. Of concern is that, while 39 percent of adolescent females between the ages of 13 and 17 have received the recommended three-vaccine series against cancer causing strains of the human papillomavirus (HPV), only 9 percent of adolescent males are completely vaccinated. Nationwide, rates for HPV vaccine remain low with only 39 percent of young females vaccinated and 21 percent of young males having taken three HPV vaccines.

Dr. Karen Landers, medical consultant for TB Control and Immunization, states, "We are very pleased with our Tdap and meningitis vaccine rates and are working to achieve even higher rates. However, as a pediatrician, I am very concerned about the low rates of HPV vaccine. As we know from medical research, certain HPV viruses can cause cervical and other cancers."

Each vaccine mentioned in the immunization survey provides important protection against devastating and life-altering diseases. Vaccinating adolescents is an important preventive health measure for the future including an opportunity to prevent some cancer later in life.

Dr. Landers reports that the Health Department is working with the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Alabama Academy of Family Physicians to improve all vaccine rates in Alabama's children, specifically targeting HPV.

HPV vaccine is recommended for all children aged 11-12 years of age. Parents are advised to request the HPV vaccine when their child receives the school-required Tdap vaccine at their health care provider or county health department.