

Montana Medicaid and Healthy Montana Kids *Plus* MESSENGER

A Child's (and Adult's) Best Shot Against Disease

We all know that staying on top of childhood vaccines — the “shots” that protect your child against 16 harmful, spreadable diseases — is important. Vaccines are necessary to help protect children as they grow and develop strong immune systems. Some are also required by daycare centers, pre-school through 12th grades and colleges. Requirements are different state by state and there are some exceptions to the requirements. Parents should be advised to learn about vaccines by talking first with their child's doctor. Schools, community clinics, or local health departments can also help to inform about requirements. (In Montana, the Department of Health and Human Services at dphhs.mt.gov has a lot of information on vaccines, including requirements, schedules, forms for exceptions and tracking, plus records access, and additional resources.)

From chickenpox to whooping cough and all in between, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) post the vaccine list, age group, *and any changes* annually on their website at www.cdc.gov. Parents (and doctors) can use the CDC's charts as a guide, but parents can ask for a “tracking card” at well-child visits. Use these to write down dates and dose amounts when children are brought in for shots. It's a good way for families to keep track of vaccinations, their type, dose, time, and place. It is also a good way to keep track of developmental milestones or growth spurts as children grow, from birth through six years old. For doctors, it can be a tool to remind parents that they need to get their child back on track if they've missed a vaccination.

Childhood vaccines can be given by themselves or some can be given with others. Some vaccines, depending on the vaccine itself and the person getting the shot, may cause some side effects. Sometimes redness or swelling at the injection site or allergic reactions may happen. Most reactions are rare and mild compared to the very serious or outcome of a disease that a vaccine can help prevent. The Federal Vaccines for Children (VFC) program in Montana (also through Montana's DPHHS website) provides vaccines to enrolled providers at no cost for the vaccine. Children through age 18 who meet eligibility requirements can get vaccinated. Montana's multi-year adolescent vaccination campaign, **MT TeenVax**, was launched in 2016 by Montana's DPHHS with the Montana chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Montana Academy of Family Physicians, and the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana Van Program. **MT TeenVax** has continued to increase teen awareness of vaccination for the HPV (human papillomavirus) series; MCV4 (meningococcal; for brain or spinal cord infections like meningitis, and bloodstream infections like bacteremia or septicemia); and Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis/whooping cough), in addition to the flu shot recommended each year.



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High Blood Pressure Changes

Do you know what your blood pressure level should be? Normal or ideal blood pressure is 120/80 mm Hg or lower. If your blood pressure is higher than 120/80 mm Hg, you may have a [common condition](#) called high blood pressure. Changes were recently made to the cutoff for high blood pressure. It was changed from 140/90 mm Hg or greater to 130/80 mm Hg or greater. Ask your doctor about your blood pressure. You may need to make lifestyle changes (quitting smoking, improving your diet, and getting more exercise) or possibly need to take medication to control your blood pressure. For more information, see heart.org or cardiosmart.org.

According to the CDC, adults (age 19 and over) generally require the flu vaccine yearly. The same goes for pneumococcal vaccines to protect against pneumococcal diseases, including pneumonia, especially if you are 65 or older (and if recommended by your doctor). These are timely reminders before flu season hits hard again.

The Tdap vaccine (for tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis/whooping cough) is another that's recommended for adults. Other vaccines, including those for hepatitis, the HPV vaccine for cervical cancer, and others (like the shingles vaccine for those over age 50), should be considered if your doctor recommends them. As for cervical cancer prevention, the American Cancer Society cites the human papillomavirus as *the most important risk factor when it comes to cervical cancer*. The HPV vaccine is available through age 26, but produces a stronger immune response during the preteen years and early 20s.

From birth to 18 years, into adulthood, through pregnancy, and the older years, doctors should be there each step of the way as people age. Their counsel provides guidance and lays the foundation to fight against disease, using CDC and Montana guidelines and resources, to stay healthy.

Sources include: www.cdc.gov , www.nvic.org.

Online, the Nurse First Advice Line may be able to help answer member questions and provide information using Health and Wellness documents by clicking the Additional Montana Health and Wellness information on the Nurse First Website.

HPV Vaccination = Cancer Prevention

Many people may don't know that one of the most common causes of cervical and oral cancer can be prevented with a vaccine.

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common family of viruses that causes infection of the skin or mucous membranes of various areas of the body. There are over 150 different types of HPV viruses. HPV infections are so common that nearly all men and women will get at least one type of HPV at some point in their lives. Most people never know that they have been infected. In most cases, HPV goes away on its own and does not cause any health problems.

When HPV does not go away, it can cause health problems like genital warts and cancer. In the United States, there are about 39,800 HPV-associated cancers each year, with about 23,300 cancers in women and 16,500 cancers in men.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the HPV vaccine for adolescents at 11 years of age when they are scheduled to receive vaccines for pertussis or meningitis or during other medical visits. Teens or young adults that may have missed that window can still receive the vaccine. Studies have shown the vaccine produces better immunity to fight infection when given at younger ages and has been proven to have no serious side effects.

Be sure to check your child's immunization record to see if they have received all the recommended vaccines. If you have questions about any of the vaccines, talk with your healthcare provider.

For more information about HPV and the other teen vaccines, go to www.immunization.mt.gov .

Diabetes Facts

- [Type 1 diabetes](#) (formerly juvenile diabetes) is an autoimmune disease that can develop at any age. The number of cases continues to [rise each year](#).
- [Signs and symptoms](#) of type 1 diabetes may look like a passing mild illness. Untreated type 1 diabetes can lead to [major complications](#), coma or death.
- If you or a family member has type 1 diabetes team up with your [local diabetes educator](#) to help manage your diabetes and live a full life.



Substance Use Disorder Treatment

- Approximately 64,000 Montanans have a substance abuse disorder (SUD); a [chronic relapsing disease that changes the brain structure](#) and function, potentially leading to harmful behaviors.
- [SUD is treatable](#) and can be managed with a [combination of medication](#), individualized behavioral counseling, skills training, and relapse prevention.
- The first step to recovery is to seek treatment; call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) to [find a behavioral health provider in your area](#).

Drugs Don't Work in Patients Who Don't Take Them! (C. Everett Koop, MD)

You might be surprised to hear that only half of Montana Medicaid members take their medications as prescribed. Not taking your medications can cause serious health problems; not taking them the way your healthcare provider thinks you're taking them can also! Most medications prescribed at your healthcare provider's office are preventative. Even though you may not feel differently when taking them, they're still working to protect you in very important ways. For example:

- Taking medication to lower your blood pressure and cholesterol can decrease your risk of heart attack and stroke.
- Getting better control over your blood sugar with diabetic medications decreases your risk of blindness, kidney failure, nerve damage, and amputation due to damaged blood vessels.
- Medications that help strengthen your bones decreases your risk of fractures.

According to the American College of Preventative Medicine*, nonadherence (not taking medications regularly and as prescribed) results in:

- **5.4** times higher risk of hospitalization or premature death for patients with high blood pressure
- **2.5** times higher risk of hospitalization for patients with diabetes
- **40%** increase in nursing home admissions.

Having trouble remembering to take your medication? Pill boxes or phone reminders are helpful tools.

Unsure what your medication is for or how to take it? Ask! Your health care provider's most important job is keeping you healthy.

Difficulties getting to the pharmacy? See if your trip qualifies for Medicaid travel by calling 1-800-292-7114 before you go. Many pharmacies also offer delivery or mail order. Ask your pharmacy for more information.

Did you know that Montana Medicaid allows 90 day fills on most maintenance medications? Ask your pharmacy for more information.

Are there any obstacles or problems with taking your medications? Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist about ways they can help. Together, we can help to make YOU the healthiest you that you can be!

*Medication Adherence Clinical Reference. Copyright 2011. American College of Preventive Medicine. All Rights Reserved.

Key Contacts

Medicaid/HMK *Plus* Member Help Line

For questions regarding benefits co-payments, or Passport to Health:

1-800-362-8312

Nurse First Advice Line

For questions when you are sick, hurt, or have health questions.

1-800-330-7847

[MT NurseFirst](#)

Montana Relay Service

For the deaf or hard of hearing.

1-800-253-4091 or 711

Montana Public Assistance Help Line

For eligibility questions.

1-888-706-1535

[MT Public Assistance](#)

Transportation Center

For questions regarding travel or approval. **Call before you travel or you may not be reimbursed.**

1-800-292-7114

