

Important info about immunizations for PALS Doulas

❖ What is the PALS policy about immunizations for doulas?

- We *highly recommend* that all PALS doulas be immunized against **Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Varicella (chicken pox), and Hepatitis B**. We also *highly recommend* that all PALS doulas have a PPD (the skin test for tuberculosis) checked within 3 months of starting work in the hospital, and yearly thereafter.

❖ Why should I be immunized?

- Though we do not *require* PALS doulas to have these immunizations before providing their services in the hospital, we do *highly recommend* them (the same ones required of regular hospital volunteers) for the following reasons:
 - **For the health of your client & yourself**
 - **Measles** is a serious disease caused by a highly contagious virus, which spreads when people touch or breathe in infectious droplets passed by coughing and sneezing. It begins with fever followed by cough, runny nose, and conjunctivitis ("pink eye"). Infections of the middle ears, pneumonia, croup, and diarrhea are common complications.
 - **Mumps** is a viral infection spread from person to person by secretions sneezed or coughed from the nose or throat. Mumps usually begins with swelling and tenderness of one or more of the salivary glands; complications can include inflamed testicles, brain involvement, and inflammation of the pancreas and ovaries.
 - **Rubella** is caused by a virus that is transmitted from person to person in mucus droplets coughed or sneezed into the environment. Rubella usually is a mild illness, with symptoms of low-grade fever and swollen lymph nodes in the back of the neck followed by a generalized rash. However, complications may include joint pain, a temporary decrease in platelets, and encephalitis (inflammation of the brain).
 - **Varicella** is an infection caused by the varicella-zoster virus (VZV). The infection usually starts as a rash on the face that spreads to the rest of the body. While usually mild, it is highly contagious and can cause severe and even fatal disease in otherwise healthy people.
 - **Hepatitis B** is spread through blood and body fluids, and primarily affects the liver. It can cause chronic liver disease and liver cancer.
 - **Tuberculosis** is a disease that primarily affects the lungs and is spread through mucus droplets coughed up by infected people. More than 25,000 new cases of TB are reported annually in the United States, and it currently kills more people in the world than does any other infection.
 - **For the health of her baby**
 - Many of these diseases are more serious and even deadly when acquired prenatally or during the birth process.
 - For example, 90% of infants who are infected with Hepatitis B by their mothers at birth become chronic carriers (and so are at high risk for liver cancer)
 - **For the health of other patients on the Labor & Delivery Floor and elsewhere in the hospital**
 - You may be in contact with other pregnant women who are earlier on in their pregnancies and are being hospitalized for pre-term complications; infections can be very dangerous to these women's developing babies.
 - A woman who contracts chickenpox in early pregnancy can pass the virus to her fetus, causing abnormalities in 2% of cases; in addition, the chicken pox virus sometimes leads to fetal demise or spontaneous abortion, while some infected fetuses die in infancy.
 - Rubella in expectant women often leads to congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) in their fetuses. This is a devastating disease characterized by deafness, mental retardation, cataracts and other eye defects, heart defects, and diseases of the liver and spleen that may result in a low platelet count with bleeding under the skin.
 - In addition, many hospitalized patients have immune systems that do not function well (due to HIV, cancer, or other problems); these infections can be much more deadly for them.

❖ Where can I get these immunizations?

- If you have a primary care doctor, he or she can give you these immunizations. If you are a UPenn student, you can go to the Student Health Service to get them.
- If you don't have insurance or a primary care doctor, you can go to a Philadelphia District Public Health Center for free immunizations
 - The closest center is at 43rd & Chester Streets, phone # 215-685-7504
 - Call for an appointment for vaccinations; the PPD can be placed and read without an appointment

❖ Where can I find out more information about immunizations?

- The website for the National Network for Immunization Information is <http://www.immunizationinfo.org/>

Any other questions? Please contact the PALS On-call Coordinator!