

ADULT IMMUNIZATION

Adults, like children, need vaccinations to prevent certain infectious diseases. Each year in the United States, approximately 70,000 adults die from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Immunization works by stimulating the body to make substances called 'antibodies'. The antibodies will circulate throughout your body, ready to attack and kill organisms that cause the infection.

Vaccines, in general, are safe and effective. The risks from the diseases they prevent are much greater than the risk from the vaccines themselves. Side effects from vaccination are usually minor and temporary. They can include soreness, redness or swelling at the injection site, or low-grade fever. There is a small risk of more serious problems from some vaccinations, but they are rare. Ask your doctor about this before you receive the vaccination.

All healthy adults should be vaccinated against the following infectious diseases. Some people have medical conditions that make vaccination unsafe. Your doctor can tell you if you should be vaccinated.

Influenza (flu)

Influenza is a highly contagious viral infection of the nose, throat and lungs.

Because the flu virus changes from year to year, it is necessary to receive a yearly vaccination each fall. The best time is between mid-October to mid-November. This timing will offer protection during the peak flu season, which is January and February. Those who are allergic or sensitive to eggs should not be vaccinated with this vaccine.

Pneumococcal Disease

Pneumococcal disease is a bacterial infection which attacks the lungs, bloodstream and/or the brain. Only one or two injections are required. You can receive this vaccination at any time during the year. The vaccine is very effective in reducing death from this serious infection.

Diphtheria and Tetanus

Diphtheria is an airborne bacterial disease that usually affects the tonsils, throat, nose, and/or skin.

Tetanus is a bacterial disease that affects the nervous system.

Most adults receive their first dose of vaccine as children, but require a booster shot every 10 years (after age 7) to remain immune. A combination shot, called the TD booster, protects against both diseases.

Hepatitis A vaccine

Hepatitis A causes an infection in the liver that can be prevented through vaccination.

It is spread through what is called the 'oral-fecal route of transmission'. Infection occurs by drinking water contaminated with human stool containing the virus, eating fruits or vegetables that have been exposed to contaminated water, or food that has been handled by someone who has poor personal hygiene. Contaminated raw shellfish can also cause disease. The vaccine is recommended when traveling to certain countries where the infection is more common. Check with your doctor. You must be at least 12 months of age to receive the vaccine.

Hepatitis B vaccine

Hepatitis B virus causes a serious infection and possible advanced disease in the liver. There are also other viruses that can cause hepatitis. You might not have any symptoms even though the infection is in your body. The liver becomes damaged if the infection is not treated. Hepatitis B infection can cause cirrhosis of the liver (scarring), and even liver cancer. The liver carries out many important functions. In fact, you cannot live without your liver so it is important to do everything to keep it healthy.

Who should be vaccinated?

The hepatitis B vaccine series of three shots begins when a baby is born.

Many teens and adults have not been vaccinated, because the vaccine had not been developed when they were born. Hepatitis B vaccination is recommended for all groups except for those people who have certain medical conditions.

Hepatitis B vaccination is recommended for:

- Adults who were born in any Asian or African country
- Health care workers
- People who have hemophilia
- People who live with someone who has hepatitis B
- I.V. drug users
- Men who have sex with men

Why should the baby of a Hepatitis B carrier mother be vaccinated?

The baby has a great chance of becoming infected during childbirth if the mother is carrying the virus. In fact, this is when most people become infected. The mother usually does not know that she has the Hepatitis B infection.

Babies born in the U.S. are given their first dose of Hepatitis B vaccine before they

leave the hospital after birth. This is the way to prevent the baby from developing the infection and the liver disease that can develop later in life.

All babies born in the U.S. are required by law to be vaccinated against Hepatitis B. It is very important that parents take their children to a doctor or clinic to get all three doses of the vaccine.

Varicella

This is the virus that causes chicken pox. You do not need this vaccine if you had chicken pox or were born in 1980 or before. If you were born after 1980 and do not remember having chicken pox, talk with your doctor about getting vaccinated.

Pregnant women and women who think they might be pregnant *should not* have this vaccination.

Shingles Vaccine

Shingles is a very painful infection caused by the varicella zoster virus. In fact, it is the same virus that causes chicken pox. However, shingles causes painful blisters to form around a small localized area of the body.

This vaccine became available in 2006 and is recommended for adults 60 years or older.

Human Papilloma Virus Vaccine

There are many types of this virus and the vaccine does not protect against all of them. It is 70-90% effective in preventing infection from 4 types including the ones that cause cervical cancer, genital warts, and cancer of the vulva and vagina.

Vaccination is presently recommended for girls/women 13-26 years of age.

Measles, Mumps and Rubella

Measles, mumps and rubella are highly contagious viral diseases. Rubella (German Measles) can cause birth defects in the fetus of a pregnant woman. Most adults are likely to have been infected naturally. Adults born after 1957 who have not been vaccinated or have no proof of immunity (through blood tests) need to be immunized. All women of childbearing age who have no history of vaccination should be tested for antibodies against rubella. A combination injection (MMR), given in two doses, protects against measles, mumps and rubella. Vaccinations should not be given to pregnant women or those considering pregnancy within the next three months.

Check with your doctor to see what shots you need and always keep a personal immunization record. Protect yourself from these vaccine-preventable diseases. Get immunized today.

For more information contact: www.cdc.gov