

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

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 vaccination every year. This is especially important for pregnant women, the elderly and those with chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and chronic lung disease. Vaccination should begin as soon as the flu vaccine becomes available. The flu season can start as early as October and last through May. Seasonal flu activity usually peaks between

December and March. Those who are severely 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. Signs of pneumonia include coughing, fever, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, rapid breathing, or shortness of breath, chills, or chest pain. Adults 65 years and older should receive the pneumococcal vaccination. Two injections are recommended. You can receive this vaccination at any time during the year. The vaccine is very effective in reducing death from this serious infection.

Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis (Tdap)

Tetanus is a bacterial disease that affects the nervous system.

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

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious bacterial disease that causes violent coughing mainly in infants and children. However, pregnant women, family members and caregivers in close contact with infants and young children are recommended to be vaccinated against the disease.

Adults aged 19 years and older who have not received a dose of Tdap should receive the Tdap vaccine and then a Td booster every 10 years. The Td booster protects against tetanus and diphtheria.

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
- Adults with diabetes who are younger than age 60

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 is recommended for adults 50 years or older, regardless of whether they have had shingles.

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) 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, boys/men 13-21 years of age if not previously vaccinated. Men between the ages of 22-26 whose immune systems are compromised, have sex with men, or have HIV should also be vaccinated.

Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR)

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.

Reference:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov