

Immunizations for Adults

Aren't immunizations just for children?

No. Adults also need immunizations (“shots”) to keep them from getting certain diseases. And, like children, adults need certain immunizations at certain ages. Many adults need to be immunized because of medical problems they may have (see box below). Talk to your doctor if you have one of these medical problems.

Adults also may need to be immunized if they work in certain places or have certain living situations or lifestyles, or if they are planning a trip to a foreign country (see the box on page 2).

Medical Problems and Recommended Shots

If you have any of the following medical problems, ask your doctor, nurse or physician assistant about what shots you might need.

<i>Medical problems</i>	<i>Shots</i>
Alcoholism	Pneumococcal vaccine
Cancer	Influenza and pneumococcal vaccines
Cirrhosis	Pneumococcal vaccine
Diabetes	Influenza and pneumococcal vaccines
Requiring dialysis	Hepatitis B vaccine
Factor VIII or IX deficiency	Hepatitis B vaccine
Heart disease	Influenza and pneumococcal vaccines
Hemoglobinopathies	Influenza vaccine
Hodgkin's disease	Influenza, pneumococcal and Hib vaccines
HIV infection	Pneumococcal, influenza, Hib and hepatitis B vaccines
Kidney disease	Influenza and pneumococcal vaccines
Lung disease, including asthma and emphysema	Influenza and pneumococcal vaccines
Sexually transmitted disease	Hepatitis B vaccine

Hib = *Haemophilus influenzae* type b vaccine.

Reasons for Additional Shots

If you are in any of the groups in the left column below, ask your doctor, nurse or physician assistant about what shots you might need.

<i>Shots may be recommended for:</i>	<i>Shots</i>
Abusers of injectable drugs	Hepatitis B vaccine
Animal hide workers	Anthrax vaccine
College or technical school students	Measles vaccine (need two doses since birth)
Clients and staff of group homes, workshops and schools for the developmentally disabled or mentally handicapped	Hepatitis B and influenza vaccines
Health care workers	Measles (need two doses unless born before 1957), influenza and hepatitis B vaccines
Homosexual males	Hepatitis B vaccine
Household members or sexual partners of hepatitis B carriers	Hepatitis B vaccine
Household members of persons at high risk for influenza	Influenza vaccine
Prostitutes and persons with multiple sexual partners in the past six months	Hepatitis B vaccine
Public safety workers (such as police officers and firefighters)	Hepatitis B and influenza vaccines
Residents of nursing homes and chronic care facilities	Influenza and pneumococcal vaccines
Staff of nursing homes and chronic care facilities	Influenza vaccine
Veterinarians, forest rangers, field workers and animal handlers	Rabies vaccine; plague vaccine if living and working in western or southwestern United States

Who should get an influenza (flu) shot?

The influenza vaccine helps prevent influenza, or the “flu.” The flu can cause fever, muscle aches, cough, sore throat and headache. The flu is very contagious (it passes easily from person to person). It can be fatal if it occurs in a person who has other medical problems such as a heart condition, diabetes or lung disease.

The flu shot should be given to everyone 65 years of age or older. It should also be given to younger people who have heart problems, lung problems, diabetes, kidney problems or problems with the immune system. The shot is also recommended for people who live with someone who may have problems if they get the flu. The shot is also recommended

for people who have jobs in the health care field or others who may have problems if they get the flu.

The flu shot is needed every year. The virus that causes the flu changes every year, and the vaccine only protects a person from the flu for a limited time. The best time to get a flu shot is in the fall. Most people who get a flu shot have a sore arm for a day or two. The flu shot cannot give you influenza. If you are allergic to eggs you may have serious side effects from the flu shot, so talk to your doctor before getting the shot.

Who should get the pneumococcal vaccine?

Pneumococcal vaccine helps prevent pneumonia and blood infections caused by a bacteria called pneumococcus. Infection with this bacteria can be fatal if it occurs in a person who has other medical problems such as a heart condition, diabetes or lung disease.

Pneumococcal vaccine should be given to everyone 65 years of age or older. It should also be given to younger people with heart problems, lung disease, diabetes, cirrhosis, kidney problems or certain patients with cancer.

The vaccine is given only once, except in persons with certain medical problems. The vaccine is given as a shot. Many people have a sore arm for a day or two after they get the pneumococcal vaccine.

Who should get tetanus and diphtheria shots?

Tetanus toxoid, which is given as a shot, prevents lockjaw. This illness causes painful muscle spasms, and it can be fatal. The tetanus shot is for everyone—and it's especially important to get a tetanus shot if you have a dirty cut or wound. The tetanus shot should be given every 10 years, but if you have a dirty cut, it may be given sooner (five years from the last shot). Some people get a sore arm or a mild fever from the tetanus shot.

Diphtheria toxoid is also given as an injection. Diphtheria is an infection of the throat that can hurt the heart or the lungs. The diphtheria toxoid can be given with the tetanus toxoid, and it's needed every 10 years. Some people get a sore arm or a fever from the shot.

Who should get measles, mumps and rubella vaccines?

Measles is a very contagious illness that can cause pneumonia, infection of the brain or death. Measles vaccine is usually combined with mumps and rubella vaccine. All children are given two measles shots. Adults born after 1956 may need a total of two measles shots if they work in the medical field or go to college.

Serious side effects from the measles vaccine may occur in people with an immune disease, other than infection with HIV (the virus associated with AIDS). People with a severe allergy to eggs may also have serious side effects. Because of this, such patients should talk to their doctor before they have a measles shot. Pregnant women should not have

a measles shot. People can get a sore arm and fever from the shot.

If a pregnant woman gets rubella, her baby may have birth defects. Rubella is very contagious. Women who might want to have children in the future and have not had either the shot or rubella infection should be vaccinated. People who are pregnant already or who have certain immune diseases should not be given rubella vaccine. People can get a sore arm and a fever from the rubella shot.

Who should get the hepatitis B vaccine?

Hepatitis B is a liver infection that can cause liver failure, liver cancer, or death. The hepatitis B vaccine should be given to all infants and to adults at high risk for hepatitis B.

Persons at high risk for exposure to hepatitis B include those who need dialysis, those who have had a sexually transmitted disease (including AIDS), people with multiple sexual partners, homosexual males, persons who abuse injectable drugs, health care workers, police officers, firefighters, and both workers and clients in homes for the developmentally disabled. All persons who live in a house with a hepatitis B carrier should be given hepatitis B vaccine.

A series of three shots of hepatitis B vaccine is needed for full protection. Hepatitis B vaccine is made in baker's yeast, and it cannot cause AIDS. The shot can cause a sore arm.

What other shots may be needed?

Other vaccines include the anthrax vaccine, which may be needed for people such as animal hide workers. Rabies vaccine may be needed for people such as veterinarians, forest rangers, field workers and animal handlers. Plague vaccine may be needed for these types of workers who live in the western or southwestern United States. Other vaccines may be needed for people traveling to certain parts of the world. If you have travel plans or if you have any questions, talk to your family doctor. Adults who have not had chickenpox (varicella) should talk to their doctor about whether to be vaccinated.

This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.



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