



IMMUNIZATIONS FOR ADULTS

Immunizations are not just for babies and young children. Adults also need to get vaccines.

What Are Immunizations?

Immunizations (sometimes called vaccinations) are given to well people to prevent disease. The mixture of cells and chemicals that are given to you are called vaccines. Most immunizations are given by injections (shots), but a few can be taken as a nose spray or by mouth.

If I Am A Healthy Person, Do I Need Immunizations?

Immunizations can help you stay healthy and avoid certain diseases. For example, a yearly flu shot can help keep you from catching the flu. Even though you are healthy, your work, travel, or life in general may expose you to serious illnesses like hepatitis. These shots can help you avoid illness, great expense, or even death.

Are There Risks to Immunizations?

Immunizations are very safe. Being sick with a disease is more dangerous than getting immunized against that disease in almost all cases. Most vaccines used in the United States are made from killed or inactive virus, so the vaccines cannot give you the disease. Most vaccines cause soreness at the shot site and a few can cause a feeling like you have the flu, which lasts for a day or so. People with some health conditions—like pregnancy—should not get certain vaccines. Ask your health care professional which vaccines you need and which are safe for you.

How Do I Know if I Need Any Immunizations?

The flip side of this handout has information on which immunizations you need as an adult. If you work or travel outside the United States you may also need other immunizations. Your local health department or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can provide information on which vaccines you will need for foreign travel. You can talk to your health care provider or call your local health department to find out where to get any immunizations that you need.

Can I Get Immunizations if I Am Pregnant?

Many immunizations are safe during pregnancy, and some are recommended. There are a few vaccines that should not be given during pregnancy.

Before pregnancy is the ideal time to get your immunizations up to date, especially for rubella and varicella (chicken pox).

Pregnant women are encouraged to get a flu shot if they are pregnant between October and February and to get a tetanus booster if it is needed. Hepatitis B vaccine is also recommended for women at risk for the infection. Some vaccines, such as those for hepatitis A, human papillomavirus, and live flu, and the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) and varicella (chickenpox) vaccines, should not be given to pregnant women.

Right after your baby is born is a good time to get the MMR vaccine, the tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap) vaccine, or the varicella vaccine, if you need them.

Immunization Schedule for Adults

Who Needs This Vaccine? How Often?	Safe During Pregnancy?
Influenza (flu) live vaccine: Healthy people aged 49 or younger who are not pregnant and have no medical problems. (Yearly: shot or nasal spray.)	No
Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR): People born after 1957 or who have no immunity when checked with a blood test. Especially important for women planning a pregnancy. (1 time with possible need for boosters.)	No
Varicella (chicken pox): Anyone who has not had chicken pox. (One series of 2.)	No
Pneumococcal vaccine: People aged 65 and older or persons with certain medical problems. (Usually 1 time.)	No
Zoster (shingles): All persons 60 or older. (1 time.)	No
Hepatitis A: Recommended for persons at risk* and those who travel out of the United States. (One series of 2 shots.)	Unknown, not recommended
Human papillomavirus (HPV): All women up to age 26 unless pregnant. (One series of 3 shots.)	Unknown, not recommended
Meningococcal: College freshmen who live in a dorm and others at risk due to travel or chronic disease. (1 time.)	Unknown
Hepatitis B: Everyone under age 18 and if older, for persons at risk for Hepatitis B [†] (One series of 3 shots.)	Yes, if at risk [†]
Influenza (flu) inactivated: People wishing to avoid the flu and persons who could become very ill if they get flu [‡] (Yearly.)	Yes, if pregnant between October and February
Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Td or Tdap): Adults who have not had these vaccines in childhood or have not had a booster in 10 years. Those with an injury and no booster in 5 years. Those with no booster with pertussis. For postpartum women with no recent vaccination, healthcare workers, and persons around infants to age 12 months. (An initial series plus regular boosters.)	Yes postpartum

*You are at risk for hepatitis A if: 1) you live in a community that has a high incidence of hepatitis A; 2) you use street drugs; or 3) you have chronic liver disease.

[†]You are at risk for hepatitis B if you: 1) have more than one sex partner during a 6-month period; 2) have sex or household contact with a person who has hepatitis B; 3) use street drugs; or 4) are a health care or public safety worker who could have come into contact with body fluids.

[‡]You should get a flu with inactivate virus every year if you: 1) are over age 65; 2) are a health care worker; 3) are pregnant; or 4) have long-term health problems, such as diabetes, asthma, kidney disease, or heart disease.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

www.cdc.gov/Nip

March of Dimes:

For vaccine information for women who are pregnant http://www.marchofdimes.com/pnhec/159_16189.asp

Immunization Action Coalition:

www.immunize.org or www.vaccineinformation.org or (651) 647-9009

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