

Adult Vaccination FAQs

Are there vaccines that protect adults against communicable diseases?

Yes! Vaccinations are available and recommended to protect adults from many infections, including influenza (flu), pneumococcal disease, herpes zoster (shingles), human papillomavirus (HPV), pertussis (whooping cough), hepatitis A, and hepatitis B. Vaccinations against some less common diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella (German measles), tetanus (lockjaw), diphtheria, and varicella (chickenpox) are also needed by some adults.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recommendations clearly identify people who are at risk and who should be immunized to prevent these diseases and their complications. Consult your healthcare provider or local health department about your own immunization status as well as current immunization recommendations.

Why immunize?

There is no cure for some of these illnesses and all may cause tremendous health problems, disability, and even death. Vaccines are one of the safest medical products available. Vaccines are effective, and can prevent the suffering and costs associated with these preventable diseases.

Which vaccinations do adults need?

All adults need **tetanus and diphtheria (Td)** booster vaccines at 10-year intervals throughout their lives. One of the booster vaccines should be **Tdap**, which includes protection against pertussis, the infection that causes whooping cough. The US has been experiencing whooping cough outbreaks and infants have died from it in recent years.

Adults born after 1956 who are not immune to any one of the following: measles, mumps, or rubella, should get the **MMR** vaccine.

Women age 26 years and younger and men age 21 and younger should be immunized against **HPV**, a virus that causes many cancers, including cervical, anal, penile, oral, and throat cancer.

All adults age 65 years or older, as well as adults age 19 to 64 years who smoke or have diabetes or chronic heart, lung, liver, or kidney disorders need protection against **pneumococcal disease**, and should consult their healthcare providers regarding this vaccine.

Influenza vaccination is recommended annually for all adults.

Hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for all adults 19 to 59 with diabetes. It is also recommended for any sexually active adult who is not in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship; people whose sex partners are infected with hepatitis B; individuals seeking evaluation or treatment for a sexually transmitted disease; men who have sex with men; people who share needles, syringes, or other drug-injection equipment; people who have close household contact with someone infected with hepatitis B; healthcare and public safety workers at risk for exposure to blood or blood-contaminated body fluids on the job; people with end-stage kidney disease; residents and staff of facilities for developmentally disabled persons; travelers to areas with moderate or high rates of hepatitis B infection; people with liver disease; and people with HIV infection.

Hepatitis A vaccine is recommended for travelers to countries where hepatitis A is common; people with chronic liver disease; people who have blood clotting-factor disorders such as hemophilia; men who have sex with men; and users of injection and non-injection illegal drugs. Hepatitis A vaccine can also be given to anyone who wants to be immune from infection.

Chickenpox vaccine is recommended for all adults who have not had chickenpox or the vaccine previously.

Meningococcal vaccination is recommended for adults not previously immunized with the meningococcal conjugate vaccine who do not have a functioning spleen, who have terminal complement deficiencies, who will be first year college students, are military recruits or certain laboratory workers, or who will be traveling to or living in countries where meningococcal disease is common.

Adults age 60 years and older should receive a single dose of **shingles** vaccine whether or not they report a prior episode of shingles. Individuals with chronic medical conditions may be vaccinated unless a contraindication or precaution exists for their condition.

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Where can I get my vaccines?

Vaccinations are available from most family doctors and internists. Additionally, your city or county health department or local hospital may hold clinics to administer influenza, pneumococcal, hepatitis A, and hepatitis B vaccines. Many pharmacies offer these and other vaccines. Clinics may also be available in shopping malls, grocery stores, senior centers, and other community settings.

How often do I need to be vaccinated?

Different vaccines are recommended at different ages throughout adulthood—for instance HPV is given at or before age 26 while shingles is given at age 60 or older. Some vaccines are one dose only for most adults (eg, pneumococcal, MMR) while others are a series of vaccines given over a short timespan (eg, HPV is given as three doses over six months). Influenza and Td/Tdap are given regularly throughout adulthood: you need influenza every year and Td once every 10 years, with Tdap in place of one Td booster. The best way to decide exactly what you need and how to get fully immunized is to talk with your doctor or other healthcare provider.

What do these vaccines cost?

Out-of-pocket costs for vaccines vary depending on insurance coverage. Check with your healthcare provider or clinic, and your health insurance plan to determine your costs. For people on Medicare, influenza, pneumococcal, and hepatitis B vaccinations are fully paid for by Medicare Part B if your healthcare provider accepts the Medicare approved payment. The shingles vaccine and Td/Tdap are covered under Medicare Part D so costs to individuals will vary based on their particular plan.

For more information, speak with your healthcare professional or visit www.Adultvaccination.org.