



Adults need vaccines, too

Regardless of age, most people aren't too excited about getting their shots. But vaccines are an easy and effective way to protect yourself from preventable diseases. Just like kids, adults need vaccines, too.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccinations from birth throughout adulthood. That's because immunity can fade over time, and as people age, they become more vulnerable to complications from common infections like the flu.

Some vaccines are intended for adults only. For example, vaccination for shingles — an excruciating, hard-to-treat skin rash — starts at age 60.

And if you somehow got through childhood without contracting chickenpox and getting the vaccine, you're not off the hook. You should still get the vaccine because some diseases — like chickenpox — can be more serious if you contract them as an adult.

If you're not sure if you are up to date with your immunizations or if you have concerns about the safety of vaccines, talk with your health care provider. And if you're planning a trip abroad, you'll want to see your provider four to six weeks before you leave. Some vaccines take time to become effective in your body and some must be given in a series over a period of days or weeks.

Here are recommended immunizations for adults:

- Influenza (flu): all adults, every year.
- Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Td/Tdap): booster vaccine every 10 years for all adults, including those 65 years and older. One of the booster vaccines should be Tdap, which includes protection against pertussis, the infection that causes whooping cough.
- Pneumococcal (pneumonia): all adults 65 or older, along with adults ages 19 to 64 who smoke, have diabetes, or chronic heart, lung, liver or kidney disorders need protection and should consult a physician about this vaccine.
- Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR): adults born after 1956 are not immune and should get the MMR vaccine.
- HPV vaccine: a three-dose vaccine for women age 26 and younger and men age 21 and younger, to protect against cervical cancer in women and other kinds of cancer in both men and women.
- Hepatitis A: two doses for adults at risk.
- Hepatitis B: three doses for adults at risk.
- Chickenpox vaccine: all adults who have not had chickenpox or the vaccine previously.
- Shingles vaccine: one dose for adults age 60 and older.
- Meningococcal (Meningitis): one or more doses for adults not previously immunized, or first year college students, military recruits or lab workers traveling to countries where the disease is common, or those at risk.

—Information provided by Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota