

Live Healthy Georgia— Seniors Taking Charge Immunization Awareness

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Did you know that 90% of all deaths related to the flu in the United States occur in adults aged 65 and older? Did you also know that half of those 85 years and older will experience a painful bout of shingles? With vaccinations, most of these infections can be prevented. For National Immunization Awareness Month, we will go over a few frequently asked questions about vaccines and older adults.



and do not cause any side effects. Before any vaccines are given, they go through extensive testing to ensure their safety and effectiveness. These vaccines are also monitored to ensure their safety. However, vaccines can still cause side effects. In most

cases, these effects are mild, such as fever or soreness where the vaccine was given. Serious reactions are very rare, and the benefits of vaccines outweigh the risks. Be sure to speak to your healthcare provider about which vaccinations are right for you. If you have an allergic reaction, be sure to see a doctor immediately, and do not receive a follow-up shot.

What are vaccines, and how do they work?

Our immune systems are able to remember viruses or bacterium that attack us and are able to kill them in the future before they make us sick again. Vaccines contain an inactive or dead virus or bacteria that cannot make us sick but can help our immune systems recognize it to help protect us in the future. This way, when an active virus or bacteria attacks us, our bodies can defend themselves.

Are vaccines safe?

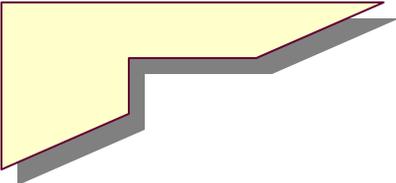
For most people, vaccines are effective

Which vaccinations are recommended for older adults?

It is important to ask your healthcare provider which vaccines you need. We will now briefly go over the vaccines that older adults usually receive and when these vaccines are needed.

Influenza (flu)

This vaccine is recommended once a year for everyone 6 months of age and older.



It is important to get the flu vaccine every year because there are many different strains of the flu virus that cause illness, and these change each year. However, those at risk of infection are particularly recommended to be vaccinated, including older adults and those with certain chronic diseases. The flu vaccine is given through a shot or nasal spray.

Pneumococcal

This vaccine protects against pneumococcus, a bacteria that can cause various infections, one of which is pneumonia. It can also cause blood infections and meningitis. Adults 65 years and older are recommended to receive this vaccine because they are at an increased risk of catching this illness.

Tetanus-diphtheria (Td, Tdap)

Td protects against tetanus and diphtheria, while the Tdap protects against both of these, as well as pertussis (whooping cough). Adults who have had a tetanus-diphtheria booster at least five years ago and have not gotten the Tdap vaccine should receive the Tdap version. Otherwise, adults should get Td boosters every 10 years.

Zoster (shingles)

This vaccine protects against shingles, which only affects those who have had chickenpox. With shingles, the chickenpox virus reawakens and causes a

rash and extreme pain. All adults aged 60 years and older who have not yet had the vaccine should receive it, even if they have had shingles before, because you can get the virus again. It is important to note that this vaccine is different from the chickenpox vaccine, so even if you have received chickenpox vaccine, you should still get the shingles vaccine.

Other vaccines recommended to adults of all age groups

If you have also not received the following vaccines, be sure to consult your healthcare provider: varicella, MMR, meningococcal, hepatitis A, and Hepatitis B.

Helpful Resources:

- *Vaccines and Adults: A Lifetime of Health*. The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Vaccine Education Center and the American Medical Association.
<http://www.chop.edu/export/download/pdfs/articles/vaccine-education-center/vaccines-adults.pdf>
- *Vaccinations for Adults*. Immunization action Coalition.
<http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4030.pdf>
- *Vaccine Safety*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/Vaccines/Index1.html>