



Live Healthy Georgia

Seniors Taking Charge

Immunizations: Not Just for Kids

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August is National Immunization Awareness Month. Many adults think that they had all the vaccines they need when they were young. Of course, getting an annual flu shot is the exception. However, older adults still need to stay up to date on other vaccines. Keep reading for more information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Which vaccines do I need?

There are a variety of factors that help inform which vaccines you need as an adult. There are routine vaccines that all adults need, such as the flu shot. Other vaccines may be necessary depending on where you travel, your previous immunization history, and if you are at high risk for certain conditions. The following immunizations are recommended for older adults:

- ✓ Seasonal influenza (annually).
- ✓ Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap): One dose for adults up to age 64, and one dose for adults 65 years of age or older if in close contact with an infant and have not previously received a dose of Tdap. Adults need a Td (tetanus and diphtheria) booster every 10 years. Talk to your doctor if you have not had at least 3 Td vaccines in your life time, or if you have a deep or dirty wound.

- ✓ Shingles vaccine (Herpes zoster): Anyone age 60 or older.
- ✓ Pneumococcal diseases: One dose for anyone age 65 or older, or with certain health conditions (i.e., heart disease, immunosuppressive diseases, lung disease, diabetes, etc.).
- ✓ Tip: Review your immunization history with your doctor to be sure that you are up to date.

More Reasons for Immunizations

Keeping up to date on your vaccines is not just good for yourself but also for your family. As an adult, you may not be as vulnerable to illness as when you were a child without a developed immune system. However, preventing ourselves from getting sick helps us not pass an illness to a family member, especially young children. In addition, as we age, we begin to be more susceptible to certain illnesses. So, it's important to keep up to date on vaccines so that we are less likely to develop flu or pneumonia.

Finally, getting immunized as an adult sets a good example for the rest of your family. It's important for all family members to stay well together.

Other vaccines that I may need

There are several other vaccines that you may need, depending on where you travel or if you are at risk for the condition (talk to your doctor about your risk).

- Hepatitis B.
- Hepatitis A.
- Measles, Mumps, & Rubella. You need at least one dose if born after 1957, but possibly a second dose is required, as well.
- Varicella. You may need this vaccine if you never had chickenpox, or if you received only one dose of a vaccine.
- Other vaccines. Check with the CDC travel site for information about other vaccines you may need if you travel outside the United States.
<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/AdultImmunizations/>



But I'm Afraid of the Side Effects

Most vaccines cause minimal side effects, such as pain and redness at the injection site, headache, dizziness, fever, aches, and fatigue. Severe allergic reactions are rare and usually occur within minutes to hours of receiving the vaccination. However, if you have experienced side effects previously, talk to your doctor about any possible allergic reactions.

If you are concerned about the safety of vaccines, you can visit the vaccine monitoring site, available at

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/VaccineMonitoring/Index.html>

Remember, the benefits of immunizations usually outweigh any risks involved. Vaccines help keep both you and your family healthy. So, talk with your doctor about your immunization history and make sure that you are up to date.

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Adults need immunizations, too.

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/AdultImmunizations/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Adult Immunization Schedule.

<http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4030.pdf>

Pictures

http://www.peoplespharmacy.com/siteassets/flu_shot.jpg

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/AdultImmunizations/>