

Adult Immunizations: An Overview

Every year, thousands of adults suffer from severe illnesses, and many may even die, from diseases that can be prevented.

The good news is that you can protect yourself from some of these diseases – the best way is to get vaccinated.

Many serious diseases are actually caused by tiny viruses and bacteria that you can't even see.

Some live on surfaces and travel from person to person through touch.

Some travel through the air from a sneeze or cough.

Some viruses can be passed through blood or other bodily fluids.

And others may already be living in your body.

However you get these germs, once they enter your body they can do damage and cause infection because your body does not know how to fight them.

That's why vaccines are so important.

A vaccine contains a weakened or dead part of a germ. When you get a vaccine, the germ enters your body but it doesn't make you sick.

Instead, your body makes antibodies and other parts of the immune system are taught to fight the germ as well.

Each vaccine you get teaches your body how to fight that virus or bacteria. When your body comes in contact with those germs again, it already has the ability to fight them and can prevent the infection.

Every year get an Influenza vaccine. This vaccine helps protect you from the flu and is usually available at the beginning of flu season; around September each year and is available through the entire flu season.

Other vaccines are given depending on your age, lifestyle and medical history.

So, at each healthcare appointment, talk to your healthcare provider about the specific vaccines you may need.

It is a good idea to keep a list of all vaccines you get so you know you are protected and don't double-up in the future. Ask your healthcare provider for a print-out of your records or keep a log yourself.

Your records should include the date, type of vaccine dose and where you got it. Let a family member know where you keep this list in case of emergency.

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If you think it is time for you to get a specific vaccine, or your healthcare provider has recommended one, you can usually get the vaccine during your healthcare appointment. Or you can get it at your local pharmacy or community health clinic.

Your insurance provider may cover the cost of your vaccine but you may want to call ahead of time so you know your benefits.

Most vaccines are given by injection but some, like the flu vaccine, may be given through a nasal spray.

Vaccines are safe. But as with any medication, there is a small risk of side effects. The most common side effect to any vaccine is a reaction at the injection site.

Your healthcare provider will give you a complete list of possible side effects. If you are concerned, or if you have had a reaction to a vaccine in the past, make sure you talk to your healthcare provider before getting the vaccine.

If you aren't feeling well when your injection is scheduled, talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist. She may recommend you wait until you feel better to get the vaccine.

Adult immunizations are an important part of staying healthy. They protect your body against many diseases that can cause serious health problems.

Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist about the vaccines you may need and get yourself protected today.