

Adult Immunizations

Try to remember the last time you were immunized – it has probably been a while. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have some tips for adult immunizations.

Pneumonia and influenza together represent the fifth leading cause of death in older adults. These two conditions may be prevented by receiving an influenza vaccination and pneumococcal vaccination. The pneumococcal vaccination requires a one time injection. The influenza vaccine requires an injection once per year due to the changing nature of the influenza virus. Medicare Part “B” provides for you to receive these two vaccinations: once for pneumococcal and annually for influenza.

Fifty or fewer cases of tetanus occur each year, but result in five deaths annually in the U.S. Most of these deaths occur in adults over the age of 60. In addition, nearly one out of every 10 people who get diphtheria will die from it. For these reasons, the CDC recommends that adults receive a Tetanus/Diphtheria booster once every 10 years.

Another common vaccination is for measles, mumps and rubella (MMR). MMR is normally administered once and offers protection for life. Unimmunized persons of any age can get measles, mumps or rubella, but those born after 1956 that do not have proof of immunity are particularly at risk and should be immunized.

There are certain immunizations that may benefit you if your lifestyle or job put you at risk. Vaccinations for Hepatitis “A” and “B,” Varicella (Chicken Pox) and Meningitis may benefit certain individuals. High risk individuals for these conditions include health workers, immunosuppressed persons and those who live with or have close contact with infected persons. Frequent travelers may need specific immunizations. These persons should check the CDC website for vaccination and medication recommendations for various travel destinations. That information may be accessed at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>.

It is estimated that each year in the U.S. about 50,000 adults die from vaccine-preventable diseases or their complications. Talk with your health provider about updating your immunization record.

For more information visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Immunization Program at <http://www.cdc.gov/nip/default.htm> or contact your County Extension Agent.