

Recommended Vaccinations for Adults

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Medical professionals give shots (vaccinations) to help keep our families and ourselves from getting sick from illnesses that spread easily to others (contagious diseases). Most of us get our vaccinations when we are children. The protection these vaccinations provide can wear off over time. Sometimes, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will change advice about vaccinations as more information about a disease becomes available.

There are vaccinations the CDC suggests all adults should get. This guide gives information on:

- four (4) that all adults need and
- three (3) that you need only if you have certain chances of getting the disease.



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THE FOUR (4) VACCINATIONS THAT ALL ADULTS NEED

1. Influenza (flu)
2. Pneumococcal disease (pneumonia)
3. Shingles
4. Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Tdap)

1. Influenza (flu)

Influenza, also called the “flu,” is a disease caused by a virus (germ). The disease spreads through the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It causes breathing problems.

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Flu is different from the common cold. When you have a cold, there is too much fluid (mucus) in your nose, throat, or chest. When your nose is stuffy, it can be hard to breathe. Signs of a cold include:

- Sneezing
- Itchy and watery eyes
- Coughing
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Headaches

Influenza can be mild to very bad, and can lead to death. Getting the flu shot can reduce your risk of getting the disease by as much as 40 to 60%. Signs that you may have the flu include:

- Cough—you may have greenish, yellow, or even bloody mucus
- Fever, sweating, and shaking chills
- Shortness of breath—feeling like you can't get enough air
- Fast, shallow (not deep) breathing
- Sharp or stabbing chest pain that gets worse when you breathe deeply or cough
- Not wanting to eat
- Low energy, feeling tired
- Upset stomach and vomiting, especially in small children
- Confusion, especially in older people

Important: Get a flu shot once a year. The flu season usually starts in October and ends in March. It takes about two (2) weeks for the flu-fighting cells to build up in your body.



Cautions: Before getting the flu shot, talk to your doctor if you:

- Have a fever. The doctor may want you to wait until your temperature is back to normal.
- Have had a bad reaction to the flu shot in the past.
- Have a serious allergy to eggs (because the flu vaccine is usually grown in eggs).
- Have (or have had) Guillain-Barré syndrome (a rare illness).

2. Pneumococcal disease (pneumonia)

Pneumococcal (noo-muh-kok-ul) disease is caused by bacteria (germs) that can result in pneumonia. Pneumonia is a serious infection that causes your lungs' air sacs to fill up with fluid. Signs of pneumonia are chest pain, coughs, a fever, chills, and trouble breathing. The illness can be mild to very bad, where you may need to be in the hospital. Death can occur.

Healthy adults aged 65 years or older should get the pneumococcal vaccine. These shots are very good at preventing harmful disease, hospitalization, and death.

There are two (2) shots recommended by the CDC. You do not get them at the same time.

- First, you will get a PCV13 shot (pneumococcal conjugate vaccine).
- One year later, you will get the PPSV23 shot (pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine).



Cautions: Some people may need to get the shot before they are 65 years of age. Talk to your doctor if you are an adult between the ages of 19 and 64 with increased chances of getting the disease. Reasons include:

- Smoking
- Health problems, such as
 - Chronic lung disease
 - Heart disease
 - Leukemia (a cancer)
 - Lymphoma (a cancer)
 - Alcoholism

3. Shingles

Shingles is caused by the same virus (germ) that causes chickenpox (varicella zoster virus). Anyone who has ever had chickenpox can develop shingles. The virus stays in your body and can become active

at any time, causing shingles. Not every person who had chickenpox will get shingles. Medical experts are not sure why this is the case.

Shingles is more common in older adults. The virus causes a red rash and painful blisters. The rash appears as a long, narrow band of blisters on either the left or right side of your body (torso), around one eye, or on one side of the neck or face. The shingles virus does not lead to death.

Shingles is a disease that can spread from one person to another (contagious). This can happen when a person has direct contact with the open sores of the rash. A person with shingles is contagious until the blisters scab over (a crust forms over the sores during healing).

It is suggested that all adults age 50 and older get the shingles vaccine, **Shingrix**. This vaccine was approved in 2017. It offers protection for up to four (4) years. It is given in two (2) shots. After the first shot, a second shot is given any time between 2 to 6 months.

Important: The shingles vaccine does not stop you from getting the illness. It is not used to treat people who have the illness. The medicine helps reduce the pain and shorten the time the rash is active if you do get shingles.



Cautions: See a doctor right away if you have pain and a rash near your eye. This can cause permanent eye damage.

4. Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Tdap)

The medicine in this shot helps to protect you from getting three illnesses:

- **Tetanus:** Also known as “lockjaw.” These bacteria (germs) affect your nervous system. Tetanus causes painful jerks of the jaw and neck muscles. It can make breathing difficult. Lack of oxygen can lead to death. There is no cure for tetanus. The disease is rare in the United States because of the vaccine.
- **Diphtheria:** This illness is caused by bacteria that can lead to a serious infection of the nose and throat. Diphtheria makes a thick, gray material that covers the back of your throat. It can make breathing difficult and can lead to death.

The disease is rare in the United States because of the vaccine.

- **Pertussis:** Also known as “whooping cough.” This illness is caused by bacteria that are easily spread from one person to another (contagious). It causes uncontrollable, strong coughing that makes it hard to breathe. Pertussis can be very serious, especially for babies because it can lead to death.

You get the Tdap only one time. Check with your healthcare provider if you do not remember getting the shot or do not have medical records showing you got it.

Important:

- Having an up-to-date Tdap vaccine is very important for people who have close contact with babies younger than 1 year of age. This includes parents, grandparents, other family members, friends, and childcare providers.
- Ten (10) years after getting the Tdap, get a Td booster. The booster protects you from getting tetanus and diphtheria. You should get a Td booster every 10 years.



Cautions: Before getting the Tdap vaccine, talk to your doctor if you:

- Have epilepsy or other nervous system problems.
- Have had bad swelling or pain following a Tdap or Td shot.
- Have (or have had) Guillain-Barré syndrome (a rare illness).

THE THREE (3) VACCINATIONS YOU NEED ONLY IF YOU HAVE CERTAIN RISK FACTORS

5. Hepatitis A
6. Hepatitis B
7. Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)

5. Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus (germ). The disease is spread by eating or drinking foods infected with the virus. It is easily spread from one person to another (contagious).

The sickness is usually mild and the virus goes away on its own. Many people who get hepatitis A never realize they are sick. The disease does not cause long-term liver damage.

Signs of the disease may include:

- Feeling tired
- Feeling sick to your stomach
- Not wanting to eat
- Belly pain
- Mild fever
- Yellow coloring of the skin or eyes (jaundice)

The hepatitis A vaccine is very good at preventing the disease. You need the hepatitis A vaccine only once in your lifetime. There are two (2) shots given 6 months apart.

Important: The best way to stop hepatitis A is to wash your hands **often** with soap and water. See the information at the end of this publication:

- When should you wash your hands?
- How should you wash your hands?



Cautions: Those at high risk for getting hepatitis A include people:

- Who travel to other countries where the hepatitis A virus is common. Hepatitis A is **not** common in Canada, western Europe and Scandinavia, Japan, New Zealand, and Australia.
- Who are in close contact with a person who has hepatitis A.

6. Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis B virus (germ). Many adults who get hepatitis B have mild signs of the disease and then get better on their own. In other people, the virus stays in their bodies and causes a long-term illness that lasts 6 months or longer (chronic hepatitis B). Chronic hepatitis B can cause serious health problems, such as liver damage, liver failure, and liver cancer. This illness is treated by a healthcare or medical provider.

Hepatitis B is spread through contact with body fluids (blood, semen, saliva) of a person who has the disease. The virus is spread through:

- Unprotected sex (not using a condom).
- Sharing needles or syringes in drug use.
- Sharing personal items, such as nail clippers, razors, or toothbrushes.
- Sharing medical instruments, such as glucose monitors that are used for testing blood sugar levels.

The hepatitis B vaccine is very good at preventing the disease. There are three (3) shots:

- Shot number 1.
- After 4 weeks, you get shot number 2.
- After 5 months, you get shot number 3.

Also available is a vaccine that covers both hepatitis A and B. It is called Twinrix and is given in three shots over 6 months.

Important: The best way to stop hepatitis B is to wash your hands **often** with soap and water. See the information at the end of this publication:

- When should you wash your hands?
- How should you wash your hands?



Cautions: Those at high risk for getting hepatitis B include people:

- Having sex with or living in the same household with a person who has hepatitis B.
- Whose job puts them into contact with human blood (healthcare workers, emergency workers).
- On kidney dialysis.
- Traveling to countries where hepatitis B is common, such as Asia, the Pacific Islands, Africa, and Eastern Europe.
- Infected with HIV.

7. Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)

Measles is caused by a virus (germ) that is spread easily through the air (contagious). The disease is best known by the red rash that develops on the body. Measles is contagious four (4) days before the rash begins. It remains contagious for four days after the rash is gone.

The measles virus is found in the mucus (fluid) of the nose and throat. Droplets of mucus containing the virus are released into the air through coughing, sneezing, or talking. The droplets can land on surfaces where they can remain alive for several hours. Long after an infected person has left the area, you can catch the disease by touching contaminated objects and then rubbing your eyes, nose, or mouth.

The best way to stop the virus is to get the vaccine (MMR). The MMR vaccine is a combination vaccine for protection against measles, mumps, and rubella.

- **Measles** can lead to very bad health problems:
 - **Ear infection**—can lead to permanent hearing loss.
 - **Bronchitis**—this is swelling (inflammation) of the lining of the bronchial tubes. Bronchial tubes carry air to and from the lungs. Bronchitis causes coughing and spasms (a sudden tightening of the muscles).
 - **Pneumonia**—an infection of the lung(s).
 - **Laryngitis** (losing your voice)—this is swelling (inflammation) in the throat.
 - **Encephalitis** (swelling of the brain)—this can lead to muscle spasms, coma, permanent brain damage, or death. A coma is when a person falls into a deep level of unconsciousness (being unaware) for long periods of time.
- **Mumps** is caused by a virus (germ). Serious health problems from the mumps are rare.
- **Rubella** (also known as German measles or three-day measles) is caused by a virus (germ). It is easily spread from one person to another.

 **Cautions:** Adults should be up to date on their MMR vaccination. Individuals should check with their medical provider to ask about getting the shot if they:

- Do not have health records showing they got the vaccination.
- Do not have proof of protection from the disease, such as a blood test.
- Travel to parts of the world where measles is still common, such as Europe, Asia, the Pacific Islands, and Africa.

Adults who do not get the MMR vaccine and come down with the virus put others at risk of getting the disease. Communities need the majority of people to be vaccinated to prevent outbreaks. For more information on measles, see NMSU Extension



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Guide I-113, *Measles: Protecting Yourself and Your Family* (https://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_i/1113.pdf).

WHEN SHOULD YOU WASH YOUR HANDS?

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or open sore
- During and after you visit a healthcare facility
- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage

HOW SHOULD YOU WASH YOUR HANDS?

- **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold). Turn off the tap. Apply soap.
- **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, wrists, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum or sing the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
- **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
- **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Note: If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with hand sanitizer that has 60% alcohol or more.

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