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ADULT HEALTH BULLETIN

AUGUST 2011

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: IMMUNIZATION

August is National Immunization Month

If you think immunizations are just for children, you may want to think again! Immunizations not only help you to stay healthy, they can also help protect your loved ones.

Immunizations, also called vaccinations, are often given as shots. These shots are used to help protect you from diseases. Many times the vaccine contains a very small amount of a weakened or dead form of the cause of the disease that is being prevented. The amount in the vaccine is just enough to help your body fight off the disease should you get exposed in the future.

There are times when the vaccination does not totally prevent the disease. In these occasions the sickness may be less severe than it would be had you not received the vaccination.

Why you should get vaccines

- Immunizations help protect you and your family.
- Immunizations reduce the spread of disease.
- The vaccine cost is less than the cost of medical care if you should get the disease.
- Immunizations have very few side effects. The risks are outweighed by the benefits of being protected.



If you are pregnant or planning to get pregnant, you should talk to your doctor about immunizations you have had and if there are any that you will need. Immunizations may be needed to protect you and your baby. It is also important for members of a new mother's family be vaccinated.

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The vaccine costs less than medical care if you should get the disease.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

There are several factors that influence the vaccinations you may need:

- **Your age** – As you age, you may need a booster to help maintain your protection. You may also need to get a vaccination for protection against diseases such as shingles that do not usually affect children.
- **Your lifestyle** – Are you around children or grandchildren? Do you get together with friends often? It is important to protect family and friends by making sure you are vaccinated against diseases that may make you and them sick.
- **Possible high-risk conditions** – If you have a specific medical condition, talk to your healthcare provider about protection against illnesses such as the flu and pneumonia. Your healthcare provider should be able to let you know what vaccinations will be most helpful.
- **Type and locations of travel** – If you travel outside the United States, you should contact your healthcare provider and talk about where you are going and if you need any additional vaccinations.
- **Earlier immunizations** – It is important to know what you have been vaccinated against. If you are not sure about your previous immunizations, many healthcare providers can do a test to find out.

You should talk to your healthcare provider about vaccines you may need. These are some of the vaccines that adults need:

- Chickenpox
- Flu

- Hepatitis A and/or B
- Human papillomavirus
- Measles, mumps and rubella
- Pneumococcal disease
- Polio
- Shingles
- Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis

Remember you should talk to your healthcare provider about which vaccines are right for you.

No one really enjoys getting an immunization but you can be a great example for your family, friends and co-workers. Set an example by getting a yearly flu vaccine and any other vaccinations as needed. Vaccination is an important way to stay healthy and help those around us to stay health as well!

Immunizations have very few side effects. The risks are outweighed by the benefits of being protected.

REFERENCES:

- CDC, Adults need immunizations, too. www.cdc.gov/features/AdultImmunizations/
- Health.com, Immunizations, www.health.com

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