

# eHouseCall

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A Monthly Electronic Newsletter from HealthLink

## Doctor's Bag



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### Are you up-to-date?

Many people think vaccinations are just for kids. They couldn't be more wrong. Getting immunized is a lifelong commitment. Immunization protects your own health, and also the health of your family, your friends and people in your community.

So why is it that significant numbers of adults in the U.S. – many at high risk of contracting vaccine-preventable diseases – are not keeping up with recommended immunizations?

Side effects are one concern. Keep in mind, the risk associated with vaccine-preventable disease is far greater than the risk associated with the vaccine itself. Many patients experience no side effects after immunization. Some have soreness at the site of injection or a low fever. Only a very few experience serious reactions after being vaccinated.

Older adults often skip immunizations that are critical in fighting common but debilitating diseases. They either don't know about the availability or the need of immunization – or they have difficulty getting to the doctor's office. If you have aging parents, talk to them about the need for immunization against conditions like pneumonia and flu, and arrange transportation to the doctor's office if necessary.

When it comes to fighting diseases like flu, shingles, pneumonia and other vaccine-preventable conditions, protection is the best medicine. Vaccines do *not* eliminate diseases but they can help prevent their outbreak.

Please consult your personal physician if you have questions about your need for vaccinations.

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### MARCH

#### Adults Need Immunizations Too

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends the following immunizations for adults:



#### Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis

**Td** – Every 10 years; **Tdap** – one dose should replace a single dose of Td for adults younger than age 65 who have not previously received a dose of Tdap.

#### HPV – Human papillomavirus (cervical cancer)

Recommended for females age 26 and younger who have not completed the vaccine series.

#### MMR (Measles, mumps, rubella)

Recommended for adults born after 1956 without documentation of prior immunization.

#### Varicella (chickenpox)

Recommended for adults without documentation of immunization, particularly high-risk adults – i.e., health care workers, susceptible individuals in contact with immuno-compromised persons, college students and residents/staff in institutional settings.

#### Influenza (flu)

Every year for adults age 50 and older, individuals with chronic disorders of the cardiovascular or pulmonary systems, health care personnel and residents/staff in institutional settings, in-home household contacts and caregivers of children.

#### PPV – Pneumococcal (pneumonia)

One dose for adults age 65 and older, plus one-time revaccination after five years for persons with certain high-risk conditions.

#### Hepatitis A

Recommended for adults traveling to or working in countries with high incidence of infection, and certain high-risk adults including food handlers, persons with chronic liver disease or clotting factor disorder.

#### Hepatitis B

Recommended for certain high-risk adults, including persons with occupational risk of exposure to blood or blood-contaminated body fluids, patients and staff of institutions for the developmentally disabled, hemodialysis patients, and recipients of clotting-factor medications.

#### Meningococcal

Recommended for individuals with certain medical conditions, U.S. military recruits, college freshmen who live in dormitories, and individuals who are exposed to the bacteria, either at work or at home.

#### Herpes Zoster (shingles)

Single dose recommended for adults age 60 and older regardless of whether they report a prior episode of herpes zoster.

## DidUKnow?

- Each year on average in the U.S., about 50,000 adults die from vaccine-preventable diseases or their complications.
- Approximately 36,000 vaccine-preventable deaths each year are attributed to influenza; 90% of these deaths are in persons 65 years of age and older.
- Just 69% of seniors get an annual flu shot.
- Each year in the U.S., pneumococcal disease accounts for nearly 30,000 cases of bacteremia (bloodstream infection), and several thousand cases of meningitis (inflammation of tissues and fluids surrounding the brain and spinal cord).
- Just 66% of seniors have had a one-time pneumococcal vaccine.
- Only 44% of seniors have received a tetanus shot in the past 10 years.
- In the U.S., an estimated 1.25 million people are chronically infected with the hepatitis B virus (HBV) and can infect household members and sexual partners.
- By age 50, 80% of women will be infected with human papillomavirus (HPV), the virus that causes cervical cancer. There are on average 9,710 new cases and 3,700 deaths from cervical cancer in the U.S. every year.
- Hepatitis A is the most common vaccine-preventable disease acquired during travel.
- Each year, there are more than 1 million new cases of shingles, an excruciatingly painful and vaccine-preventable condition.

#### Information Sources

National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, January 2008 ([www.nfid.org](http://www.nfid.org))

Centers for Disease Control ([www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines))

National Partnership for Immunization ([www.partnersforimmunization.org](http://www.partnersforimmunization.org))

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