



"Excellence in Home Care"

Vaccines: Prevention

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Disease Prevention

Disease prevention is the key to public health. It is always better to prevent a disease than to treat it. Vaccines prevent disease in the people who receive them and protect those who come into contact with unvaccinated individuals. Vaccines are responsible for the control of many infectious diseases that were once common in this country including polio, measles, diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), rubella (German measles), mumps, tetanus, and Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib).

Vaccine-preventable diseases have a costly impact, resulting in doctor's visits, hospitalizations, and premature deaths.

Safety Issues

Because vaccines must be safe for use by as many people as possible, vaccines are developed in accordance with the highest standards of safety. Years of testing are required by law before a vaccine is licensed and distributed. Once in use, vaccines are continually monitored for safety and efficacy. As a result, the United States currently has the safest, most effective vaccine supply in history.

As with any medical procedure, though, vaccination has some



Many people think that only young children need to get vaccinated. However, thousands of older adults die or have serious complications each year from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Some adults incorrectly assume that the vaccines they received as children will protect them for the rest of their lives. Generally this is true, except that:

- Some adults were never vaccinated as children
- Newer vaccines were not available when some adults were children
- Immunity can begin to fade over time
- As we age, we become more susceptible to serious disease caused by common infections (e.g., flu, pneumococcus)

Did you know?

The "flu shot" is an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle, usually in the arm. The flu shot is approved for use in people older than six months, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions.

The nasal-spray flu vaccine is a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu (sometimes called LAIV for "live attenuated influenza vaccine" or FluMist®). It is approved for use in healthy* people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.

* "Healthy" indicates persons who do not have an underlying medical condition that predisposes them to influenza complications.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Licensed Medicare and Medicaid agency by the State of Texas.

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risks. Individuals react differently to vaccines and there is no way to absolutely predict the reaction of a specific individual to a particular vaccine. Anyone who takes a vaccine should be fully informed about the benefits and the risks of vaccination.

Side effects can occur with any medicine, including vaccines. Slight discomfort (such as pain at the injection site) is normal and should not be a cause for alarm. Nearly 90% of adverse events following vaccinations are categorized as non-serious.

Receiving combination vaccines or several different vaccines during one visit is safe and offers the quickest protection against multiple diseases. Scientific data show that this results in very few side effects. Similarly, studies show that combination vaccines (which combine multiple vaccines into a single vaccine) pose no greater risk for side effects than vaccines given individually, with few exceptions (such as the combined MMRV vaccine). These vaccines also are as effective in the combined form as they are when given separately.

Ask your healthcare provider if you have any further questions about the safety of vaccines or if others are recommended for you.

The Center for Disease Control Recommends These Vaccines for Older Adults

- Influenza (Flu)
- Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis (Tdap)
- Pneumococcal
- Shingles: (Herpes Zoster)

Influenza (Flu) Vaccine

Get the flu vaccine every year to avoid getting the flu and spreading it to loved ones. Every year in the U.S., an average of 36,000 people die from the flu. Most of these deaths are among adults 65 years old and older.

Pneumococcal Vaccine

One shot reduces the risk of pneumococcal disease. Pneumococcal disease can cause serious infections of the lungs (pneumonia), the bloodstream (bacteremia), and the covering of the brain (meningitis). Pneumococcal disease is one of the most common causes of vaccine-preventable death in the U.S. and is particularly dangerous for older adults.

Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis (Tdap) Vaccine

One shot of Tdap vaccine reduces the risk of getting potentially deadly infections and the risk of spreading some of these infections to others. Pertussis, also called whooping cough, can be a serious—even deadly—disease in babies. Parents and grandparents can be ill with whooping cough for months and can pass the infection to babies too young to be vaccinated. Tetanus is a severe, painful infection. Most of the deaths from tetanus are among older adults. Adults less than 65 years of age should receive a dose of Tdap vaccine in place of one of their 10-year tetanus booster shots.

Shingles (Herpes Zoster) Vaccine

One shot reduces the risk of shingles and long-term pain after shingles in adults 60 years old and older. Shingles is a disease that causes a painful, blistering rash. One in five people with shingles will have severe, long-term pain after the rash heals. Shingles is more common and more serious in older adults. Nearly one million Americans get shingles every year and about half of them are 60 years old and older.

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