



Adult Vaccination:

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I really need vaccines?

All adults need vaccines. Vaccines help prevent diseases that can make you seriously ill, force you to miss work, result in medical bills and make it difficult for you to care for your loved ones. You may need certain vaccines depending on your age, job, lifestyle or health conditions – all of which can change over time.

Getting vaccinated reduces your chance of getting sick and spreading a serious disease to others – including people who can't get certain vaccines and those who are more likely to become seriously ill (infants, older adults, people with chronic health conditions and people with weakened immune systems).

While you might have gotten vaccinated for some diseases as a child, you may not have received all of your recommended childhood vaccines. If you did receive all of your childhood vaccines, the protection from some vaccines can wear off over time and you might need a booster. For example, adults need a booster shot every 10 years to prevent tetanus. Certain vaccines are recommended only for adults. For example, the zoster (shingles) vaccine is recommended for adults aged 60 and older.

How well do adult vaccines work?

Vaccines work with the body's immune system to reduce your chances of getting certain diseases.

The level of protection varies by vaccine and by other factors, like your age and health. However, immunization is the best defense against many serious diseases.

Are adult vaccines safe?

Vaccines are one of the safest ways to protect your health.

Vaccines go through thorough testing before they are used. Vaccines have to be approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Once the FDA approves a vaccine, medical and scientific experts make recommendations on who should be vaccinated. They do this by reviewing the data and research on the vaccine and the disease. Even after a vaccine is approved for use, the FDA continues to monitor it to make sure it's safe.

It is safe to get most vaccinations while taking prescription medications. If you take medication that suppresses your immune system, talk to your provider about live vaccines. These vaccines use a weakened form of the virus to protect you. Live vaccines include the vaccine for measles, mumps and rubella; the vaccine for chickenpox; and the shingles vaccine.

Are there any side effects from adult vaccines?

Yes, side effects are usually minor, such as soreness where you get the shot or a slight fever, but they go away within a few days.

Some people may have allergic reactions, but serious or long-term side effects are rare.

Learn more by visiting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website on recommended vaccines for adults: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults

This information has been adapted from the CDC provider resource "Vaccine Recommendation, A Series on Standards for Adult Immunization Practice," available at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/adults/downloads/standards-immz-practice-recommendation.pdf.