



Vaccinations for Adults: Participant Handout

Introduction

Vaccinations aren't just for kids. As we get older we are less resistant to some diseases, and vaccinations can help us fight off viruses and bacterial infections. Adults who are immunized help reduce the risk of infection in the community for others who are not yet immunized or cannot be immunized due to health reasons. Even though some diseases like polio and diphtheria are very rare in the US, we still need to continue immunizations to maintain our current level of resistance and prevent a recurrence of these diseases. ¹ In addition, certain vaccines wane over time and thus boosters are needed to maintain our immunity. Some vaccines are specifically meant for older adults such as the shingles and pneumococcal vaccines.

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Describe why it is important for older adults to get vaccinations.
 - List at least three types of vaccines and when/why they should be given.
 - Describe the immunization process and its role in community health.
 - List 2-3 places where they could go to get immunizations.
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10 Reasons Why Adults Need Vaccinations

1. You may no longer be protected by previous vaccines. Pertussis is given as a one-time dose as part of DTaP childhood vaccine or Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) and then tetanus and diphtheria boosters (Td) are recommended every 10 years.
2. Help protect your kids. If you are pregnant or take care of young kids whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine and the flu vaccine are recommended. Tdap is recommended with every pregnancy because women who get the vaccine at 36 weeks of gestation pass some antibodies on to the unborn child giving it passive immunity until it can be vaccinated at 8 weeks.
3. Some vaccines are just for adults—the shingles vaccine is one.
4. You may need it for travel—yellow fever and meningococcal vaccines are required for travel to certain parts of the world.
5. Everyone needs a flu vaccine. Flu strains change over time and every year the vaccine changes.

6. You may not have been fully vaccinated as a child.
7. Some vaccines are new or improved.
8. As a health care worker you may be required to get a complete vaccination series.
9. If you are sexually active with a number of partners Hepatitis B vaccine is highly recommended.
10. If your immune system is compromised by a chronic disease such as asthma, heart disease, lung disease or diabetes, or you smoke cigarettes, the pneumococcal vaccine can help prevent serious diseases.

Recommended Immunizations for Adults

- Adults 19 and older should have an annual flu shot as well as Td/Tdap, Chickenpox, MMR (up to age 55), and HPV (up to age 26)
- Adults 60 and older should get the Shingles (Zoster) vaccine.
- Adults 65+ should get the Pneumococcal vaccine--a dose of PCV13 first and then one year later PPSV23. If you get PPSV23 prior to age 65 then you need to get PCV13 after.
- Adults 19 and older with certain risk factors should have Pneumococcal, Meningococcal, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Hib vaccines. All of these are currently part of the recommended childhood vaccination schedule, but adults may not have received them.

The Immunization process and its role in community health

An important aspect of community health is the number of people that are already immunized. In addition, the strength and maturity of immune systems within the population is important. Very young children, elderly people, or those with compromised immune systems are more susceptible to infectious diseases. When a large percentage of the population is vaccinated, they indirectly protect those around them who aren't immunized. This is called herd immunity. Diseases which spread from person to person are slowed down when they encounter an immunized person. Herd immunity can begin to come into play with as little as 40% of the population vaccinated, however, more contagious diseases require vaccination rates of 80-95%. This is the "herd immunity threshold".² The more people that are vaccinated in the community the better the protection against diseases.³

When and Where to Get Immunized

Most vaccines are available year around. Since the flu vaccine changes every year it is usually available just before flu season—around the first of October. You can get all of your vaccinations at your local public health office. Pharmacies are also equipped to provide most of the common vaccinations, even those needed for travel. Most primary care

providers and school-based health centers also provide common vaccines. In flu season special flu vaccination clinics may be set up as part of work place health fairs or as a way to better protect the community.

If you are traveling to a foreign country visit the CDC travelers' health site to determine which vaccines are required and then call your local public health department or pharmacy to make sure they have the vaccination in stock. You should get your vaccines 4-6 weeks before traveling to allow your immunity to develop. Vaccines that may be required before entering certain countries include: yellow fever, typhoid, rabies, and Japanese encephalitis. Visit: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>

Conclusion

Vaccinations play an important role in community health. While vaccinations are usually optional for adults it is an important responsibility that adults take on to help protect themselves, their family and their community. When we get vaccinated we can serve as role models and advocates for a healthy community.

Resources

Understanding How Vaccines Work (February 2013)

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/conversations

Tips for Locating Old Immunization Records (May 2015).

www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3065.pdf

Vaccination Administration Record for Adults (April 2014)

www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2023.pdf

¹ CDC (2014, September) Vaccines and Immunizations-Why Immunize? <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/why.htm>

²The History of Vaccines (2015) Herd immunity. The College of Physicians of Philadelphia. <http://www.historyofvaccines.org/content/herd-immunity-0>

³ NIH Allergy and Infectious Diseases (October 21, 2010). Community Immunity. <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/pages/communityimmunity.aspx>