

Adult Immunizations: What's the big fuss?

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Like me, most adults assume that their risk of getting childhood diseases in adulthood should be slim to none. After all, most of us were vaccinated as children and even up through college. Until recently, this was a safe bet. School and university requirements made sure that people were vaccinated prior to entry. These days, people are living longer and potentially needing re-vaccination in order to keep up their immunity. Whose responsibility is this?

Health care workers themselves do not routinely get the recommended vaccinations. A 2003 immunization survey conducted by CDC showed seasonal influenza vaccination coverage for only 40% among health care workers. This means that patients and healthcare workers can transmit infections to and from each other. Not to mention that the direct health care burden of adult vaccine-preventable diseases has been estimated at about \$10 billion annually (Adult Immunization: Shots to Save Lives, 2010). Why aren't adults getting vaccinated?

Currently, there is no real system in place to ensure adults have access to or receive the vaccines they need, outside of institutions that have vaccine requirements. Many adults do not receive regular well care exams. Others switch doctors and health plans often which makes it difficult to track and recommend vaccines to patients. Lacks of healthcare insurance and high cost of co-payments are obstacles as well. The cost of purchasing the vaccine and the risk of not getting reimbursed may prohibit the provider from offering vaccinations in the first place.

How can we turn this around? Know what vaccinations you should have.

If you are 27-59 years of age you need to have the following immunizations:

- Flu vaccine every year
- Tdap vaccine once, then a Td booster every 10 years
- 2 doses varicella
- 1-2 doses of MMR
- 1-3 doses pneumococcal
- 1 or more doses meningococcal
- 2 doses of hepatitis A
- 3 doses of hepatitis B

If you are 60-64 years of age you need to have a dose of Zoster.

If you are over 65 years of age you need a dose of pneumococcal.

Check out *Real Stories, Real people* to learn more about the why you need to get vaccinated: <http://www.nfid.org/real-stories-real-people>

Prevention starts with you. Please contact the Needham Health Department at 781-455-7500 ext. 511 for more information.