

Vaccinations

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Hearing the recent news stories of the resurgence of childhood diseases that vaccination could have prevented, I began to think about adult vaccines that sometimes get overlooked. Having worked in health care for many years as an LPN, I thought people may be interested to know about some of the vaccines that the College of Family Physicians of Canada and Immunize Canada are recommending for people aged 50 and older.

1. **Influenza Vaccine:** A yearly dose is recommended for older adults, especially those with chronic conditions. Side effects can include soreness or swelling at the injection site, hoarseness, red or itchy eyes, cough, fever, aches, headache, and fatigue. These effects usually only last a day or two and are not usually serious. Contraindications (reasons to avoid the vaccine) include a fever, allergy to eggs, or a severe reaction in the past.
2. **MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) Vaccine:** People born before 1956 may not have had this vaccine, and anyone who didn't have one of these childhood diseases may need a booster shot. Women who are, or are trying to get, pregnant should avoid this vaccine, as should anyone with cancer or undergoing cancer treatments, or who has an allergy to gelatin or neomycin.
3. **TDaP (Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis) and TD (Tetanus/Diphtheria):** Those who have never received the TDaP vaccine should receive it at least once as an adult; this is particularly important for people who come into close contact with children younger than 12 months. Booster shots are required every 10 years. Side effects may include soreness at injection site and, in some cases, an allergic reaction. Consult your doctor if you have epilepsy, have had GBS, or had severe swelling or pain from a previous dose.
4. **Herpes Zoster (Shingles) Vaccine:** Anyone who has had chicken pox is at risk of shingles, a painful, blistering skin rash; this vaccine can lessen the effects. Only one dose is needed. Anyone with an allergy to gelatin, the antibiotic neomycin, or to any other component of the vaccine should avoid this vaccine, as well as those with weakened immune systems or who are taking steroids.
5. **Pneumococcal (Pneumonia) Vaccine:** Everyone over the age of 65 and people over 50 who have specific risk factors should receive this vaccine. Only one dose is needed, but for individuals with asthma, COPD, heart disease, diabetes, leukemia, lymphoma, or smokers who are at high risk of invasive pneumococcal disease this vaccine can be lifesaving.
6. **Hepatitis A and B Vaccines:** People who travel to locations with a high incidence of Hep A & B should consider this vaccination. Hep A vaccine is given in 2 doses (0 & 6 months), while Hep B is given with 3 doses (0, 1 & 6 months). Contraindications include an allergy to yeast, an allergic reaction to a previous dose, or being moderately ill at time of dose.

Please keep in mind this is for information only; it is important to talk to your family physician about whether you are a candidate for any of these vaccines.



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