

# Why do adults need immunizations?

Vaccines have been very successful in preventing disease in the United States. Diseases that used to kill thousands, like polio, whooping cough, and measles, almost don't exist now. Immunizations reduce the number of deaths and other complications caused by diseases. Many adults don't know that they still need to get vaccines and vaccine boosters. Some believe that the vaccines they got as children will protect them for the rest of their lives. The vaccines you need as an adult are based on your age, health conditions, lifestyle, places you travel, and vaccine history. You never outgrow the need for immunizations.

Here's what you'll find in this newsletter:

- Why it is important to be immunized
- Which vaccines are recommended for childcare providers
- How to find out what vaccines you need and possible side effects
- How to pay for the vaccines you need
- Where you can find more information about vaccines

**Questions? Contact the  
Arkansas Department of Health at  
501-661-2169 or  
[www.healthy.arkansas.gov](http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov).**

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*ACHI is a nonpartisan, independent, health policy center that serves as a catalyst to improve the health of Arkansans.*



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## Why is it important for me to be immunized?

Most adults believe that the vaccines they got as children will protect them for life, but:

- Some adults never got vaccines as children
- New vaccines are available
- Protection from some vaccines can fade over time

Childcare providers spend lots of time in close contact with infants and young children who may not have received any or all of their needed immunizations. Childcare providers who have not gotten all their adult immunizations could spread diseases to unprotected children, families, and others. Unimmunized children can also spread diseases to childcare providers.

Vaccines prevent disease and other outcomes like:

- Loss of time at work
- Loss of income if paid sick time or health insurance is not available
- Spreading disease to children or families
- Causing a daycare center to lose money because children are sick

## What vaccines are recommended for childcare providers?

Two immunizations are very important for childcare providers: the flu and Tdap vaccines. Why?

- Infants cannot get a flu vaccine until they are 6 months old, and are not fully protected until they get at least two doses.<sup>1</sup>
- Tdap protects against tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough (also known as pertussis). Although adults usually got a vaccine against these diseases when they were children, protection weakens over time. Whooping cough can cause complications for infants and young children.

## How do I know what vaccines I need?

If you have your vaccination records, those may show what vaccines you have been given and when. If you don't have those records, talk to your health care provider. To prepare for a visit with your health care provider, think about these aspects of your life:<sup>2</sup>

- What vaccines you have had and when
- What diseases you have had
- Your age
- What type of work you do
- What health conditions you have (like asthma or COPD)
- Whether you travel and where you travel to
- Whether you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant
- Whether you have contact with infants, children, the elderly, or others who may be at risk of becoming sick or having complications

Visit [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/rec-vac/which-vac-rec.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/rec-vac/which-vac-rec.html) for more resources to help you figure out what vaccines you may need.

## How will I pay for the vaccines I need?

Most health insurance plans cover the cost of vaccines, but you should check with your insurance company. The Affordable Care Act now requires that new health insurance plans cover the cost of preventive services, like vaccines and other services, at no cost to you.

Talk with your health care provider about possible options and programs available to help. You can also visit [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov) for more information. Many vaccine makers like GlaxoSmithKline, Sanofi Pasteur, and Merck have programs to help people get vaccines at no cost or very low cost.

## Aren't there side effects?

Like any medicine, there is a small risk of a side effect or bad reaction, but most are minor and go away within a few days.

Vaccines must go through years of testing before they are licensed to be used with people. Sometimes the process can take longer than 10 years! Once in use, vaccines are constantly checked for safety and effectiveness by the CDC and the Food and Drug Administration. The number of people who have side effects is very small compared with the number who benefit from these vaccines. For more information on vaccine safety or possible side effects, visit [www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/index.html) or [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/side-effects.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/side-effects.htm).



Credit: CDC/Judy Schmidt (2006)

## Where can I find more information?

If you would like to find more information about the importance of adult immunizations, which immunizations you need, and vaccine safety, please visit these websites:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/index.html))
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ([www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov))
- National Foundation for Infectious Diseases ([www.adultvaccination.org](http://www.adultvaccination.org))

*If you have any questions, please contact the Arkansas Department of Health by calling 501-661-2169 or visiting their website at [www.healthy.arkansas.gov](http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov).*

### Sources:

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Children, the Flu, and the Flu Vaccine. *Seasonal Influenza (Flu)*. Retrieved February 12, 2013, from <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/children.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. All Adults Need Immunizations. *Adult Vaccination*. Retrieved February 12, 2013, from <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/rec-vac/need-imz.html>