



Springfield-Greene County  
Health Department  
*Helping people live longer, healthier, happier lives*

## **You're Never Too Old For Immunizations**

by Leslie Davis, RN

Getting immunized is a lifelong, life-protecting job. Talk to your healthcare provider or local health department to make sure you have all the vaccinations you need.

To prevent seasonal influenza (flu), a yearly flu vaccination is recommended for healthcare workers, people 50 and older, pregnant women, anyone in close contact with high risk individuals, anyone with a chronic health condition, and anyone that simply wants to avoid getting the flu. The flu vaccine is usually offered in the fall.

Senior adults 65 and older who have not had the pneumococcal vaccination should consider getting one. Adults under 65 may also need a pneumococcal vaccination if they have certain medical conditions, such as a damaged spleen, no spleen, cancer, HIV infection, AIDS, diabetes mellitus, chronic lung condition or certain other medical conditions. A second dose of the vaccine may even be necessary for some people.

A tetanus diphtheria (Td) vaccine is recommended every 10 years. Adults who have never had the Td vaccination will need a 3-dose primary series. People younger than 65 who haven't had the pertussis vaccination (whooping cough), should include that in one of their Td doses and get the Tdap.

Hepatitis B vaccine may be needed for people at high risk for developing the disease. Hepatitis B is spread through contact with blood or body fluids from someone who is infected. The vaccine is administered in a 3-dose series separated by 6 months.

The Hepatitis A vaccination is available to any adult that wishes to be protected from this disease. Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease caused by the Hepatitis A virus. Hepatitis A is found in the stool of people who have the virus. It is spread by close personal contact, or by eating food or drinking water that has been contaminated by Hepatitis A. The vaccination series includes two vaccinations given 6 – 18 months apart.

The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is available for women and girls from 9 – 26 years old. The vaccine protects against 4 major types of HPV, which include two types that cause about 70% of cervical cancer and two types the cause about 90% of genital warts.

Adults who were born in 1957 or later will need at least one dose of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (MMR) and may also need a second dose.

Adults who have never had chickenpox, or who were vaccinated with only one dose, may need to be vaccinated against chickenpox.

Young adults headed to college or university and planning to live in a dormitory setting should consider being vaccinated against meningococcal disease – a serious bacterial illness. People with certain medical conditions including a damaged spleen, or no spleen, should receive this vaccination.

There is also a vaccination to prevent shingles (Herpes Zoster). This vaccination is for adults 60 and older who do not have a weakened immune system. In clinical trials, the vaccine prevented shingles in about half of the people aged 60 and older. It can also reduce the pain associated with shingles.

Immunizations are not just for kids. Adults need to be sure they are up to date with all recommended vaccinations in order to help them live a longer, happier, healthier life. ■