

BOOSTER SHOTS RECOMMENDED FOR ADULTS



I just turned 65 and would like to find out what types of vaccinations are recommended to Medicare beneficiaries and how they are covered.

Most people think that vaccinations are just for kids, but adults—especially seniors who tend to have weaker immune systems—need their shots too. Here's a rundown of what vaccines the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend for people 65 and older and how they're covered by Medicare.

Flu (Influenza): While you probably already know that flu shots are recommended every fall to all seniors, you may not know that those over 65 also have the option of getting a high-dose flu vaccine instead of a regular flu shot. This vaccine—known as the Fluzone High-Dose—has four times the amount of antigen as a regular flu shot does, which creates a stronger immune response for better protection. All annual flu shots are covered under Medicare Part B.

Td/Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis): A one-time dose of the Tdap vaccine, which covers tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough) is recommended to all adults. If you've already had a Tdap shot, you should return to getting a tetanus-diphtheria (Td) booster shot every 10 years. All Medicare Part D prescription drug plans cover these vaccinations.

Pneumococcal: This vaccine protects against pneumonia, which kills about 50,000 Americans each year. It's now recommended that all seniors, 65 or older, get two separate vaccines—Pneumovax 23 and Prevnar 13—at different times. Medicare Part B covers both shots if they are taken at least 11 months apart.

Shingles (zoster): Caused by the same virus that causes chicken pox, shingles is a painful, blistering skin rash that affects more than 1 million Americans each year. All people over age 60 should get the Zostavax vaccine, even if they've had shingles before. All Medicare Part D prescription drug plans cover this one-time vaccination, but coverage amounts and reimbursement rules vary depending on where the shot is given. Check your plan.

Varicella (chickenpox): If you've never had the chicken pox, this two-dose vaccine (called Varivax) is recommended to adults and is also covered by Medicare Part D plans.

Meningococcal: Adults 56 and older, who have had their spleen removed, have certain blood

deficiencies or plan to travel to parts of the world where meningitis is common, should receive the meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine. This is covered by Medicare Part D.

To help you get a handle on which vaccines are appropriate for you, take the CDC's "What Vaccines Do You Need?" quiz at www2.cdc.gov/nip/adultimmsched. Also, talk to your doctor during your next visit about what vaccinations you should get.

If you can't remember which vaccines you've already had, check with your past doctors to see if they have any records, or contact your state's health department. Some agencies have vaccination registries (see vaccineinformation.org/state-immunization-programs) that may help you.

If you can't locate your records, your doctor can test your blood to see if you're immune to certain vaccine-preventable diseases. Alternatively, your doctor may just give you the shot. According to the CDC, it's safe to repeat vaccines.

Savvy Living is written by Jim Miller, a regular contributor to the *NBC Today Show* and author of "The Savvy Living" book. Any links in this article are offered as a service and there is no endorsement of any product. These articles are offered as a helpful and informative service to our friends and may not always reflect this organization's official position on some topics. Jim invites you to send your senior questions to: Savvy Living, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.

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I took the Quiz on 4/10/16 – 67 white male in good health

Your Quiz Results: Suggested Vaccines

Your answers to the quiz suggest that you may need the following vaccines if you have not had them before or if you are not **already immune**.

Vaccine	Suggested because...
MMR - Measles-mumps-rubella	You work with patients in a nursing home, doctor's office, hospital, or other healthcare setting. Healthcare workers born in 1957 or later should receive the MMR vaccine if they lack evidence of immunity to measles, mumps or rubella. Healthcare workers born before 1957 might need the MMR vaccine. MMR vaccine SHOULD NOT be given to pregnant women or those with a weakened immune system.
Hepatitis A	You plan to travel internationally. (Note: The hepatitis A vaccine is not needed if you are traveling to Western Europe, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, or Japan.) Check the travel website (http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/content/Vaccinations.aspx) to see for which countries hepatitis A vaccine is recommended. Talk to your doctor to see if there are other reasons you should get this vaccine.
Hepatitis B	You work with patients in a nursing home, doctor's office, hospital, or other healthcare setting.

	<p>You plan to travel internationally. Check the travel website http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/content/Vaccinations.aspx to see for which countries hepatitis B vaccine is recommended. Talk to your doctor to see if there are other reasons you should get this vaccine.</p>
<p><u>Seasonal Flu (Influenza)</u></p>	<p>Influenza vaccine is recommended each year for everyone 6 months of age and older, including pregnant women. The vaccine may be given as soon as it is available and throughout the influenza season. There are several types of flu vaccine. Talk with your doctor about which flu vaccine is right for you.</p> <p>(Note: Adults older than 49 years of age, pregnant women, and anyone with chronic medical conditions should not receive the influenza nasal spray vaccine.)</p>
<p><u>Meningococcal</u></p>	<p>You plan to travel internationally. You need meningococcal serogroup A, C, W, and Y vaccine if traveling to a country where meningitis is widespread.</p>
<p><u>Pneumococcal</u></p>	<p>Your age indicates you need pneumococcal vaccination. Everyone 65 years and older should get one dose of pneumococcal 13-valent conjugate vaccine (PCV13) and one dose of pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV23). Ideally you should get the PCV13 vaccine first followed by PPSV23 at least 1 year later. If you have had PPSV23 already, then you should get the PCV13 vaccine at least one year after PPSV23. Talk with your doctor about your pneumococcal vaccination schedule.</p>
<p><u>Tdap - Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis</u></p>	<p>You need one booster dose of tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap) vaccine if you have not previously had this vaccine.</p> <p>Tdap may be given regardless of when you last received a tetanus and diphtheria (Td) dose. After receipt of your Tdap dose, you will need Td booster doses every 10 years.</p>
<p><u>Zoster (Shingles)</u></p>	<p>Your age indicates that you need a single dose of this vaccine to protect against shingles. You should receive this vaccine even if you have already had shingles. Some people should not get this vaccine if they have a weak immune system. You don't need this vaccine if you have received the varicella (chickenpox) vaccine. Zoster vaccine SHOULD NOT be given to pregnant women or those with a weakened immune system. Talk with your doctor to find out if this vaccine is right for you.</p>

* For international travelers, visit the CDC [Travelers' Health](#) website for specifics.