



St. Mary's Church Stewardship of the Body

“I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made” (Ps. 139)

Immunizations for Adults

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), immunizations are not just for kids. Regardless of our age, we all need immunizations to keep us healthy. With time, immunity from childhood vaccines can fade and we may be at risk for new and different diseases. We adults have a responsibility to protect ourselves and our loved ones.

What immunizations are recommended for adults? The specific immunizations needed as an adult depends on factors such as age, lifestyle, high-risk conditions, type and locations of travel and previous immunizations. Throughout an adults' life, immunizations are needed to protect against the following diseases:

- Seasonal influenza (flu): recommended for all adults every year
- Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough): recommended for all adults who have not previously received the Tdap vaccine. Get Tdap once, then Td (tetanus & diphtheria) booster every 10 years
- Shingles: recommended for adults 60 years and older. Only 1 dose is needed.
- Pneumococcal disease: recommended for adults 65 years and older and adults with long-term health conditions or a condition that lowers their resistance. Only 1 dose is needed.
- Hepatitis B infection: recommended for adults who have diabetes or are at risk for hepatitis B

Seasonal Influenza (Flu): This has been discussed in two previous bulletin inserts. How are we doing on getting those flu vaccinations??? It would be super if 100% of eligible parishioners at St. Mary's got their flu vaccinations!!

Tetanus (Lockjaw): This is a disease caused by bacteria found in soil which enters the body usually through a wound. In infected people, the bacteria produce a toxin in the body that causes serious, painful spasms and stiffness of all muscles in the body. This can lead to “locking” of the jaw so a person cannot open his/her mouth, swallow or breathe. Complete recovery from tetanus can take months and 30% of people who get it die. Everyone should have a tetanus shot (Td or Tdap vaccine) every 10 years. Those of us who were in Grand Forks in 1997 all got tetanus shots because of exposure to contamination associated with the big flood. So in 2007, all of us should have received another tetanus shot. If it has been more than 10 years, at your next doctor's appointment, ask for it.

Diphtheria: This is a very contagious disease that affects the respiratory system, including the lungs. The bacteria can be passed from one person to another by direct contact with droplets from coughs or sneezes. In infected people, the bacteria produce a toxin that can cause weakness, sore throat, fever and swollen glands in the neck. Effects from the toxin can also lead to swelling of the heart muscle and in some cases, heart failure. In severe cases the illness can cause coma, paralysis, and even death. It can be prevented by getting the Td or Tdap vaccine.

Pertussis (Whooping Cough): Pertussis is caused by bacteria spread through direct contact with droplets from coughing or sneezing. It starts with symptoms of the common cold (runny nose, sneezing and cough). But in 1-2 weeks, it can cause spells of violent coughing and choking, making it hard to breathe, drink or eat. The cough can last for weeks. Pertussis is most serious for babies, who can get pneumonia, have seizures, become brain damaged or even die. About 2/3 of children under 1 year of age who get it have to be hospitalized. There has been a resurgence of pertussis in the U.S. in the last couple of years with actual epidemics in some parts of the country. It can be prevented by getting the Tdap vaccine. Any adult who is around babies or young children should make sure they are protected from pertussis, not only for themselves, but to protect the children.

Shingles (Herpes Zoster): This disease is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. Like the commercial on TV says: if you have had chickenpox, you have the virus in you in a dormant state and it can become active (we don't know why) in the form of shingles. Almost 1 out of 3 people in the U.S. will develop shingles and ½ of the cases occur in people over 60. Although most people who get it just get it once, it can occur 2 or 3 more times. It can be prevented by getting the shingles shot just once. Even if you have had shingles you can still receive the shingles vaccine to help prevent another occurrence of the disease. All Medicare Part D plans cover the shingles vaccine. The amount of co-pay varies with the plan you have.

Pneumococcal Disease: The pneumococcal bacterial can cause pneumonia as well as other types of infections such as ear infections, sinus infections, meningitis, bacteremia and sepsis (blood stream infection). Although some of these infections can be mild, some cases of disease caused by the pneumococcal bacteria can be fatal or result in long-term problems, such as brain damage, hearing loss and limb loss. The bacteria is spread through coughing and sneezing. Many people can be carriers (have the bacteria in their nose or throat without being ill). Infections from the pneumococcal bacteria in adults can be prevented by one shot of the pneumococcal vaccine.

Hepatitis B: This is an infection of the liver caused by the Hepatitis B virus. It can be spread through exchange of blood or other body fluids, such as sharing razors or during sexual activity. It causes a flu-like illness with loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, rashes, joint pain and jaundice. The virus stays in the liver of some people for the rest of their lives and can result in severe liver diseases, including fatal cancer. Adults who should get this vaccine are those who: have a job that involves contact with human blood, are on dialysis, have chronic liver disease, have HIV, have diabetes and are under 60, inject drugs, engage in risky behavior, or live in or work in an institution or prison. For several years, it has been recommended that all children receive the vaccine when they are young.

Although these recommendations are made by the CDC, it is also recommended that adults consult with their physician or other health care practitioner to discuss the advantages and/or disadvantages of receiving one or more of these recommended immunizations. More information is available at the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/AdultImmunizations>