

Vaccines: A Much-needed Shot in the Arm

August is National Immunization Awareness Month... and because MedBen WellLiving encourages preventive care, here's a timely reminder to make sure your vaccinations are up to date. Shots may not be fun, but they can provide years – or in some cases, a lifetime – of protection against diseases.

Vaccines reduce the risk of infection by working with the body's natural defenses to safely develop immunity to disease. When a vaccine enters your body – in essence, imitating an infection – your immune system springs into action, releasing white cells to attack the “wannabe” infection. Once vanquished, the cells remember how to fight the disease in the future.

The use of vaccines have *nearly* eradicated such once-common diseases as polio and diphtheria. We emphasize the word “nearly” because no matter how rare a disease has become, only by completely eliminating it are we safe from it. And the only way to achieve that goal is through immunization.

It's important to note that immunizations shouldn't end when you turn 18 years old. While childhood vaccines are certainly critical, adults also need to remain vigilant about preventable diseases as they get older.

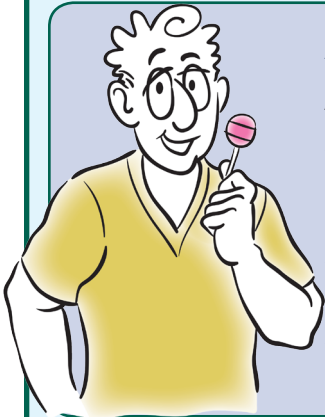
Your family doctor will often recommend vaccines as part of your annual wellness exam, or will schedule them as a separate visit. In either case, the procedure takes only a few minutes, and the rewards are invaluable.



A Grown-up's Immunization “To Do” List

All vaccines are recommended for male and female adults unless otherwise indicated.

- **Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis:** Those 18+ years of age, every 10 years.
- **Chickenpox:** Those with no history of disease and negative immunity.
- **Hepatitis A and B:** Those with no history of disease and negative immunity.
- **Measles, Mumps, Rubella:** If not immunized as a child.
- **Human Papillomavirus:** Women \leq 26 years of age.
- **Pneumococcal:** Those \geq 65 years of age or at high risk.
- **Rubella Only:** Childbearing age women.
- **Influenza:** Those 50+ years of age or at high-risk.
- **Herpes Zoster:** Those \geq 60 years of age or at high risk.



SOURCES: Centers for Disease Control, MedBen WellLiving