



Pick Your Path to Health

Immunizations—Has Your Family Got Them Yet?

Shots may hurt a little ... but the diseases they can prevent can hurt a lot!

Time and time again you hear your child complaining about the pain of getting immunization shots. So, you start to doubt—my kids don't really have to go through all those painful shots, do they?!

Well, listen—"It's important that parents know about the immunization needs of their child," said Yunna Chung in New York Task Force on Immigration Health. "Besides that, shots can protect the health of your whole family." Yunna added.

Your Kids Need Shots

It is important. Immunization shots, or vaccinations, are essential. They protect against things like measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, polio, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), Hib disease, chickenpox, and pneumococcal disease. Be sure to ask your doctor or family physician about what shots your child needs.

Babies need at least five vaccinations before they are two years old. That's because there are 11 diseases your baby needs to be protected against and most require several doses for full protection. When children grow to the age of 4 and 6, they need vaccinations again, and then again at ages 11 to 12 years old.

Most vaccinations are given as an injection or shot. They serve to protect your child against various kinds of diseases.

What shall I do if there are side-effects? Sometimes you may notice that your child becomes uneasy after getting the shots. They are not fussing over nothing—some vaccines can cause minor side effects, such as soreness where the shot is given or a slight fever.

These side effects do not last long and are treatable. You should discuss treatment options with your child's doctor. And remember your child may need extra love and care and may want to be held for comfort and reassurance.

Where can I get immunizations for my child? Vaccinations are usually free for children when families cannot afford them. You can call 1-800-232-2522 or your local or state health department to find out where you can go for vaccinations.

A personal record card is always essential for immunizations. This card should be brought with you to all medical appointments. Whenever your child receives vaccinations, make sure your clinic updates your child's shot record.

Shots are Also for You—Get Immunized to Insure A Healthy Family

You and your family need shots too!

Prevention is key to adults' health. According to the National Asian Women's Health Organization (NAWHO), adults are 100 times more likely than children to die from vaccine-preventable diseases. In addition, Asian American women are least likely to obtain clinical preventive services such as vaccinations.

As an adult, you need to be protected against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, pneumococcal disease, influenza (the flu), and varicella (chicken pox). You may also need protection against hepatitis A and B.

Hepatitis B infection rates are devastatingly high among Asian Americans, specifically among first-generation Asian Americans and their offspring. A hepatitis B shot can prevent you from getting the disease. Please see the sidebar for more information.

Recommended Immunizations for Women at High Risk

Use these charts to find out if your personal or family history puts you at higher risk for some diseases.

✓ if it applies	Are You?	Ask your health care provider if you need the following immunizations
	Over age 65	Flu vaccine; pneumococcal vaccine
	College age	MMR vaccine; varicella vaccine

	Pregnant	MMR vaccine
	A non-pregnant women of childbearing age	MMR vaccine; varicella vaccine
	Living in long-term care	Influenza vaccine; pneumococcal vaccine; MMR vaccine; varicella vaccine
	A health care worker	Influenza vaccine; pneumococcal vaccine; MMR vaccine; varicella vaccine
	Do you have or have you had?	
	Heart disease	Influenza vaccine; pneumococcal vaccine
	An autoimmune disease (including lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, scleroderma, psoriasis)	Influenza vaccine; MMR vaccine; pneumococcal vaccine; autoimmune screening test
	Chronic lung disease	Influenza vaccine; pneumococcal vaccine
	Chronic liver disease	Hepatitis A vaccine
	Thyroid disease	Influenza vaccine; pneumococcal vaccine
	HIV/AIDS	Influenza vaccine; hepatitis A, B vaccines, TB test
	Alcoholism	Pneumococcal vaccine; TB test
	A serious injury (cut or laceration)	Tetanus-Diphtheria booster vaccine

Chart excerpted from A lifetime of Good Health, by Office on Women's Health. <http://www.4woman.gov/faq/PreventionGuide.pdf>

Take Steps Now

- **Get vaccinated today.** Find a local organization that you are comfortable with to help you choose the appropriate place to get your vaccinations.
- **Ask for your immunizations.** If your health care provider doesn't ask about your immunizations, make sure to bring up the subject.
- **If you have a chronic illness, ask your care provider what vaccinations you need to prevent complications.** For example, people with diabetes are about three times more likely to die from flu and pneumonia, but a lot of them don't get the flu shot.
- **Invite your local clinic to come to your neighborhood and do a vaccination day;** supermarkets sometimes sponsor a vaccination day, maybe you can ask a local shop owner to do the same.

Look for information on free or low cost vaccinations. If you are uninsured or your insurance doesn't cover testing or vaccination, your family may qualify for free vaccination through your city or county health department.

Medicare also offers free flu shots once a year, in the fall or winter. Ask your doctor for a Pneumococcal Pneumonia shot—one shot may be all you will ever need. If you are at medium to high risk for hepatitis, ask your doctor about hepatitis B shot.

Still have questions? Visit <http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/free.htm> for free, educational publications available in your languages. Or, call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Immunization Program at 1-800-232-2522 to get referrals in your neighborhood.

By making sure you and your family are fully immunized, you may be doing the one thing for yourself that will allow you to accomplish your goals on your path to better health.

Pick Your Path to Health is a national public health education campaign sponsored by the Office on Women's Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For more information about the campaign, please call 1-800-994-WOMAN or 1-888-220-5446 (TDD), or visit the National Women's Health Information Center at <http://www.4woman.gov/> To request weekly health tips by e-mail, click on the box that says, "Click Here for weekly health tips by e-mail."