



Vaccines for Adults

Prepared by the Glen Rock Board of Health

A popular saying is “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Most of us would prefer to prevent getting ill to having to deal with illness and its aftermath. Vaccines allow us to have protection from many viruses that have no cures and may be especially dangerous to seniors and those with preexisting conditions. It is easy to lose track of when we were last vaccinated for some illnesses, so it is best to check with your primary physician who probably has a record of your past vaccinations. Also, your physician will be able to tell you if there is anything in your medical history that precludes you from getting any of these vaccines. Most of these vaccines are covered by either Medicare Part B or D. Private insurers are required to cover most vaccines in full. They may be available at your physician's office. If not, many pharmacies have these available. The county has a Vaccination Center at Bergen New Bridge Medical Center, which accepts most insurance, including Medicaid, and has financial assistance available. Their financial assistance office can be reached at 201-225-7130.

The **TDP** vaccine is often associated with childhood illnesses. However it is still recommended for adults every ten years. It protects against **tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis**. If you have never gotten it, or it is more than ten years since your last shot, you should get revaccinated for these serious diseases. There have been pertussis (whooping cough) resurgences due to people not getting their boosters.

The CDC recommends that adults over fifty get the **SHINGRIX** vaccine. It protects from **shingles** and **postherpetic neuralgia**. This is given in two doses given two to six months apart. If you received **Zostavax**, you should still get the **Shingrix** vaccine because it is more effective. **Shingles** is a very painful condition marked by blisters that can occur anywhere on the body, including the eye. **Postherpetic neuralgia** is a complication in which the pain lasts for a long time even after the blisters have cleared.

Vaccines are available to help prevent **pneumococcal disease** caused by Streptococcus pneumoniae bacteria. There are several types of these vaccines. The CDC recommends that adults over sixty five or with increased risk receive either the **PCV15** or the **PCV20** vaccine. The **PCV15** needs to be followed up by a dose of the **PPSV23**. **PCV20** is also an option for those who received the **PCV13** at any age or the **PPSV23** at age 65 or older. This is confusing! So it is best if you check with your primary care doctor.

Flu season is now here. **Influenza** is very contagious and can be severe enough to cause hospitalization and death. The **influenza** virus mutates quickly and therefore it is necessary to get a new vaccine each year. Research is used to predict which variation will likely occur each season. The vaccine is “quadrivalent” and protects against four different flu viruses. The **Fluzone High Dose Quadrivalent** is recommended for those sixty five and older for a stronger immune response. If you haven't gotten your vaccine yet, get it as soon as you can.

COVID is still with us. The weather is getting cooler and we will be spending more time indoors. **COVID**, like the flu mutates quickly. The CDC recommends getting the updated vaccines from either Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech or Novavax to protect against serious illness from **COVID**. Those who have had a prior vaccination need one new shot of the vaccine. Those who have not been vaccinated against **COVID** can get either one dose of Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech or two doses of Novavax. If you recently had **COVID**, you can probably wait three months for the updated vaccine, but it is best to discuss your particular situation with your primary care physician.

We are approaching the holiday season. Getting vaccinated is the best way to avoid serious illness and to be able to participate in and enjoy the festivities. Remember that by getting vaccinated you are not only protecting yourself, you are protecting spreading the illness to those who may not be able to get vaccinated due to medical reasons. We hope you all stay healthy and have Happy Holidays and a Healthy and Happy New Year!





Vaccine Update: Emerging Illnesses

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Vaccines have been so effective that many people have no recall of the past outbreaks that occurred before some vaccines were developed. As a result, many of us are not aware of how serious illnesses such as measles are. Since many vaccines aren't boosted yearly, it is easy for adults to forget to keep up to date on their boosters. Children who see their pediatricians for well care will receive their vaccines at the recommended schedules. Several illnesses rarely seen in recent times, have now become more common. There have been several outbreaks of measles, whooping cough, and meningitis. These are all extremely contagious.

Pertussis (aka whooping cough) causes severe coughing fits and difficulty breathing. It may lead to severe complications, especially in infants. One third of those younger than one year need to be hospitalized. The vaccine for pertussis is given in combination with that for diphtheria and tetanus. It should be boosted every ten years. Adults often do not realize this and may lose track of their last vaccination. It is best to check with your physician as to whether you have received it.

Measles has had a resurgence recently. Serious complications of measles can include pneumonia and encephalitis. In some cases it may lead to death. Children and pregnant women are especially vulnerable. The measles vaccine is given together with that for the mumps and rubella (aka german measles.) If a child has not been vaccinated, they are at great risk. Most adults who have received the MMR vaccine do not need a booster. If you or a family member is traveling out of the United States the CDC has guidelines as to whether you need additional vaccination <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/plan-for-travel.html>.

Cases of meningitis have increased lately. It is most easily spread in group conditions such as college campuses. Most people recover, however in some cases people may die within several hours or be left with permanent complications. These may include brain damage, hearing loss or learning disabilities. Vaccination with MenACWY is recommended at age 11 or 12, with a booster at age 16. Teens 16 to 18 may receive a MenB vaccine. Both of these vaccines are recommended for younger children and adults with certain preexisting conditions. Speak with your physician to see if this is an option for you.

More information on vaccines can be found on the Glen Rock Board of Health Facebook page dated December 12, 2023. Vaccines are an important way to avoid illness. It is highly recommended by the CDC to get vaccinations and their boosters as part of your preventive health care.