

Vaccines for Women

Immunization is an important step in staying healthy and preventing disease. Every woman should work with her midwife or other health care professional to learn which vaccines are recommended for her based on health status, age, lifestyle, and other factors and to track when she is due for each one.

What is a vaccine?

Vaccines can protect you against certain diseases. For example, a yearly flu shot can reduce your chances of becoming ill with the flu and can also reduce the risk of flu-related complications, like pneumonia. Most vaccines are given by injections (shots), but a few can be taken by nose, in the form of a nasal spray. The shot or nasal spray you receive is called a vaccine.

Are there risks to vaccines?

Vaccines are very safe and provide the best protection available against a number of serious diseases. While there are some risks, as with every drug or medical procedure, there are many proven and significant benefits. Most vaccines used in the United States are made from a killed or inactive virus or bacteria, so the vaccines cannot give you the disease. Side effects from vaccines are usually minor and temporary, such as feeling sore where you get the shot or a slight fever, which go away in a few days. Serious and long-term effects are rare. People with some health conditions—like pregnancy—should not get certain vaccines. Ask your midwife or other health care professional which vaccines you need, which are safe for you, and how you should expect to feel after getting them.

What types of vaccines do I need?

The bottom of this handout summarizes which vaccines you may need as a woman. If you work or travel outside the United States, you may also need other vaccines. Hepatitis B and hepatitis A vaccines are also recommended for women at



Illustrations by Abby Hellstrom

Be a SUPERHERO

Get vaccinated! Side effects from being vaccinated are usually minor and temporary, compared with potentially dangerous results of actually getting the disease.

risk for these infections. Ask your health care professional to determine which vaccines are recommended for your unique situation.

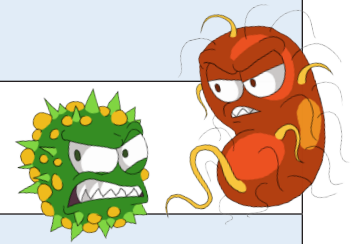
Should I get vaccines if I am pregnant?

Your local health department can provide you with vaccines that are recommended with each pregnancy. Some vaccines, such as human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine; nasal spray flu vaccine; measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR); and varicella vaccine (chickenpox) should not be given to pregnant women. Right after pregnancy is a good time to get the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine, varicella vaccine, or the hepatitis vaccines if you need them.

Continued

Immunization Schedule for Women

Who Needs This Vaccine and How Often	Routinely recommended during pregnancy?
Hepatitis A: Recommended for women at risk ¹ and those who travel out of the United States. (One series of 2 shots.)	No
Hepatitis B: Everyone under age 18 and women at risk for Hepatitis B2 (One series of 3 shots.)	Yes, if at risk ²
Human papillomavirus (HPV): All women up to age 26 unless pregnant. (One series of 3 shots.)	No
Flu Shot (Inactivated influenza vaccine): People wishing to protect against the flu and women who are at high risk for complications. ³ (Yearly) Inactivated means the vaccine contains killed or inactive viruses, which means the vaccine cannot give you the flu.	Yes, recommended every flu season; can be received anytime during pregnancy
Nasal Spray Flu Vaccine (Live attenuated influenza vaccine): Healthy people aged 2-49 who are not pregnant and have no medical problems. (Yearly: nasal spray) Live means the vaccine contains weakened viruses, which is safe for most healthy people, but not for certain people who do not have a strong immune system.	No
Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR): People born after 1957 or who have no immunity when checked with a blood test. Especially important for women planning a pregnancy. (One time with possible need for boosters)	No
Meningococcal: College freshmen who live in a dorm and others at risk due to travel or chronic disease. (Usually 1 time)	No
Pneumococcal: People aged 65 and older or persons with certain medical problems. (Usually 1 time)	No
Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis (Td or Tdap): Tdap for all women aged 19 or older who have not previously received. Td boosters ever 10 years. (1 dose of Tdap followed by booster doses with Td; Tdap every pregnancy)	Yes, Tdap recommended with each and every pregnancy ⁴
Varicella (chicken pox): Anyone who has not had chicken pox, or who has tested non-immune. (One series of 2)	No
Zoster (Shingles): All persons 60 or older. (1 time)	No



1. You are at risk for Hepatitis A if: 1) you live in a community that has a high incidence of Hepatitis A, 2) you use street drugs, or 3) you have chronic liver disease
2. You are at risk for Hepatitis B if you 1) have more than one sex partner in 6 months, 2) have sex or household contact with a person who has Hepatitis B, 3) use street drugs, 4) are a health care or public safety worker who could have contact with body fluids.
3. The flu shot is approved for anyone 6 months and older. However, you should not get the nasal spray vaccine if you: 1) are under age 2 or over age 50, 2) are a health care worker, 3) are pregnant, 4) have long-term health problems such as diabetes, asthma, kidney disease, or heart disease. For more info, see: www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/who-shouldvax.htm.
4. You should get a Tdap vaccine postpartum if you did not get vaccinated in pregnancy. Tdap is preferred during pregnancy.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

American College of Nurse-Midwives
<http://ourmomentoftruth.midwife.org/OMOT-Vaccines-for-Women>

www.cdc.gov/Features/AdultImmunizations

www.adultvaccination.org

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