



## Healthy Aging: Adults Need Vaccinations to Stay Well

Local health officials remind everyone to get all recommended vaccines to remain healthy as they age.

Vaccines offer safe and effective protection against influenza, pneumonia, shingles, tetanus, pertussis (or whooping cough) and many other vaccine-preventable diseases. "While many aging adults faithfully take the annual flu shot, it is important to stay up-to-date on **all** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended vaccinations," says Sarasota County Health Department medical director Dr. William Heymann. "This is especially important for travelers who visit families with young children even in the U.S., or who are making plans for overseas travel."

### FLU OR INFLUENZA

CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone six months of age and older as the first and best way to protect against influenza. The vaccine is readily available in our community. Health officials say it is important to get vaccinated every flu season since immune protection from vaccination declines over time. For optimal protection against the most commonly circulating flu viruses, it is advisable to get vaccinated early in the flu season. You can expect to have immunity within two weeks of vaccination. The protection you get from the vaccine will continue throughout the flu season, which usually peaks in February in Florida.

### PNEUMONIA

A serious bout with the flu can cause some people to be more susceptible to developing pneumonia, a potentially life-threatening illness. This is especially true with aging adults and those living with chronic health conditions. There are vaccines available to prevent some forms of pneumonia. "The pneumonia vaccine will not keep you from getting the flu. But it is a proactive measure to protect against the serious and sometimes deadly complications that may result from any respiratory flu," said Dr. Heymann. According to the CDC, if you have had a pneumonia vaccine before the age of 65, **you will only need one additional pneumonia shot after the age of 65** for lifetime immunity. There should be a minimum of five years between the two shots. It is important to ask your doctor before getting the vaccine.

### SHINGLES

About half of all cases of shingles occur in those 60 years of age and older. Shingles, which causes a painful skin rash, can lead to severe pain that can last for months or even years. There are other serious complications as well, including eye problems (when shingles affects the eye) and, more rarely, pneumonia, hearing problems, blindness, and brain inflammation (encephalitis). In rare cases, shingles can also lead to death.

The only way to reduce the risk of developing shingles and the long-term pain that can follow shingles is to get vaccinated. However, health officials caution people considering getting vaccinated to check with their health care provider first. This vaccine is not given to those who are living with certain medical conditions, particularly a weakened immune system.

## **TETANUS AND DIPHTHERIA WITH PROTECTION FROM PERTUSSIS OR WHOOPING COUGH**

Since immunity tends to decline years after some vaccines are given, booster shots are often necessary to provide adequate protection from these diseases. The CDC recommends that **everyone** seven years of age and older receive one dose of a vaccine known as Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria and acellular Pertussis), which offers protection against pertussis (whooping cough). In addition to providing protection to the person vaccinated, it also helps protect infants less than 12-18 months of age, who are at very high risk for severe complications from pertussis, and are not old enough to be fully immunized with the initial series of four Diphtheria, Tetanus and acellular Pertussis or DTaP vaccines.

### **WHERE TO GET THESE VACCINES**

All CDC-recommended vaccines for travel and wellness, including the shingles vaccine (or Zostavax), are available through the Sarasota County Health Department. "We currently have an adequate supply of shingles vaccine available through our Ringling Health Center, in downtown Sarasota and at the North Port Health Center, off Pan American Boulevard, for people 50 years of age and older. If that supply dwindles, we will reserve future vaccine for those 60 and older, until supplies are again more plentiful," says Donna Keith, immunization program director.

Those who receive shingles vaccine at Sarasota County Health Department are now only required to pay their co-pay, if they have coverage for the vaccine through Medicare Part D. Please be sure to bring your Medicare card so the health department can file the appropriate claim for payment.

All adult and travel vaccinations are available by appointment (suggested) or on a walk-in basis, at the following Sarasota County Health Department locations:

#### **Adult, Children and Travelers Vaccination Clinic**

2200 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota  
941-861-2784

#### **North Port Health Center**

6950 Outreach Way, North Port  
941-861-3864

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Visit CDC's Travelers' Health website at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel> to educate yourself and others who may be traveling with you about any disease risks and CDC health recommendations for international travel in areas you plan to visit.

For more information about adult vaccinations or the availability of seasonal flu vaccine clinics in the community, visit [www.sarasotahealth.org](http://www.sarasotahealth.org). You can also call the Flu Information Line at 941-861-2800.