



“Immunization through vaccination is the safest way to protect against disease.”
- World Health Organization

Vaccine Basics

A vaccine is made of very small amounts of weak or dead germs that can cause us harm.

Vaccines help our immune systems protect us from serious and sometimes deadly diseases.

Vaccines don't just protect you, they protect everyone around you. Even if you are young and healthy, you can still carry around serious germs.

You can pass these germs to people who have a weak immune system, such as infants and the elderly, and make them sick.

Getting vaccinated is the best way to avoid a serious, preventable illness.

How Vaccines Work

When harmful germs invade your body, they attack and multiply. This invasion is called an infection. Infections cause the diseases that make you sick.

Your immune system searches your body for infections. When an invading germ is found, your immune system sends an alarm that alerts the body to the infection. The body then attacks the germs. This process can take several days. Once your body has fought a germ it remembers it, building immunity.

Vaccines help your immune system do its job better and faster. When you get a vaccine, it helps your immune system fight by introducing to it a weakened or dead germ.

Vaccines let your body create immunity without getting sick. This allows the immune system to immediately recognize and attack the germ if it ever invades your body.

What Is in a Vaccine?

All the ingredients in vaccines have a specific purpose. These ingredients may include:

- Antigen: Small amounts of weak or dead germs. They help your body learn how to fight the infection faster.
- Adjuvants: These help your immune system respond more powerfully to an infection.

Some ingredients keep vaccines safe and effective. These ingredients may include:

- Preservatives for vaccine vials that contain more than one dose
- Stabilizers, such as sugar or gelatin, which help vaccines work after they are stored or moved

Other ingredients are used to create the vaccine itself. These ingredients may include:

- Cell-growing material
- Germ-killing ingredients

COMMON TYPES OF VACCINES

Influenza

Influenza, also known as the flu, is a severe lung infection that can lead to serious complications. The virus that causes the flu changes slightly every year.

The best way to protect yourself and others is to get a flu shot every fall. Everyone six months and older should get a flu shot.

Tdap

The Tdap vaccine protects us against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (also called whooping cough).

Everyone 11 and older should get a Tdap vaccine and then a tetanus-diphtheria (Td) vaccine every 10 years thereafter.

Herpes Zoster

Herpes Zoster, also known as shingles, is a virus that infects the nerves and causes very painful rash and blisters on the skin. It can lead to long-term complications in the nerves called post-herpetic neuralgia.

Almost 1 in 3 people will get shingles in their lifetime. The older you are, the higher your risk of complications.

A new vaccine called Shingrix is recommended for everyone 50 and older. If you previously received a Zostavax vaccine, you should still get the Shingrix vaccine.

Pneumococcal

Pneumococcal disease is caused by a type of bacteria. It can lead to serious infections, including:

- Pneumonia, a lung infection
- Meningitis, an infection in the lining of the brain and spinal cord
- Bacteremia, an infection of the blood stream

There are two types of pneumococcal vaccine. You may get one or both:

- PCV13: Recommended for infants, older adults, and people with certain health conditions
- PPSV23: Recommended for children 2 and older, older adults, people with certain health conditions, and adult smokers

Handwashing

- Handwashing is like a “do-it-yourself” vaccine to help stop the spread of germs that can cause diarrhea and respiratory illnesses.
- Regular handwashing is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid illness, and stop the spread of germs.
- Examples of times to wash your hands include when you prepare or eat food, care for someone who is sick, treat a cut or wound, use the toilet, blow your nose, cough, or sneeze, and touch garbage.
- To best wash your hands in five simple steps:
 1. Wet your hands with clean, running water and apply soap.
 2. Lather the soap by rubbing your hands together. Be sure to get the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
 3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds.
 4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
 5. Dry your hands with a clean towel, or allow them to air dry.

Getting Vaccinated

The information included is not a complete list of vaccines available or a schedule for vaccination. Stayed informed about which vaccines are recommended.

For more information visit the CDC website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines>

Make sure to check with your healthcare provider about which vaccines are right for you, and check your insurance plan regarding vaccine coverage and cost.

We care about your health and well-being and our staff of registered nurse care managers, mental health professionals, wellness coaches, and clinical pharmacists are here to help. If you have questions, please call 855-586-2568, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. MT.