

Keep Your Body "Tuned Up", Part 2
November 2007

Part of regular tune ups that help keep our body in top notch condition may include vaccinations. Vaccinations are formulated to safely prevent illnesses that may have a high rate of morbidity (severe illness) or mortality (death). I've included recommendations from the Center for Disease Control for new vaccines as well as those that are most commonly "missed."

Varicella (chickenpox): 2 varicella shots are now required by kinder entry. The first is given at 12 months, the second at age 4-5. Older children may have missed this booster and will be required to have record of having had chickenpox or have 2 varicella shots by 7th grade. Adults who have never had the chickenpox are encouraged to get this vaccine.

Hepatitis A: It prevents the type of hepatitis (liver infection) that is spread through "fecal-oral" contamination and through contaminated food and water. If you eat raw fish, eat out regularly, or if you travel to third world countries, you are at greater risk for developing Hepatitis A. The series consists of 2 shots 6 months apart and can be started as young as 12 months.

Flu vaccine: The flu vaccine is recommended annually for children 6-59 months of age and for those over 50; annually at any age for those with chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes as well as their caregivers; for pregnant women and family members of infants less than 6 months of age; and for healthcare workers. NOTE: Adults can get a flu shot Nov 14 from 4-6pm at RLC - a small fee may be required.

HPV vaccine: This vaccine is for females age 9-26 years of age. It prevents the development of 4 types of human papilloma virus (a sexually transmitted virus) known to be responsible for 70% of cervical cancer cases. It is given as a series of 3 vaccines.

Pneumococcal vaccines: This vaccine prevents strep pneumonia which is a bacteria that is responsible for more deaths in this country than any other infectious agent. It can cause pneumonia, blood infections and meningitis. The PCV or Prevnar is given to all children under age 2 and children up to age 5 who may have risk factors. The PCV is a series of up to 4 vaccines depending on the age the series started. The PPV (Pneumovax) is formulated for adults 65 and older, or for those with a compromised immune system. A booster after 5 years is recommended in some cases.

Tdap vaccine: This new tetanus booster includes a component for prevention of whooping cough which has made a resurgence in the community. This is generally given at 11 or 12 years of age, and then every 10 years thereafter through adulthood.

Zoster: This vaccine prevents shingles, a herpes virus that can cause a sometimes regular eruption of painful lesions. It is recommended as a one-time vaccine for those 60 and older.

If you are planning to travel abroad, you may be required to get other less common vaccines. Check with a local travel clinic such as Passport Health (888) 499-PASS(7277).