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HIV Treatment

HIV and Immunizations

Last Reviewed: March 5, 2020

Key Points

- [Vaccines](#) protect people from diseases such as chicken pox, influenza (flu), and polio. Vaccines are given by needle injection (a shot), by mouth, or sprayed into the nose. The process of getting a vaccine is called vaccination or immunization.
- There are no vaccines to prevent or treat HIV, but people with HIV can benefit from vaccines against other diseases. The following vaccines are recommended for all people with HIV: hepatitis B; human papillomavirus (HPV) (for those up to age 26); influenza (flu); meningococcal; pneumococcal (pneumonia); and tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (a single vaccine protects against these three diseases).
- Additional vaccines may be recommended for a person with HIV based on the person's age, previous vaccinations, risk factors for a particular disease, or certain HIV-related factors.

What are vaccines?

[Vaccines](#) protect people from diseases such as chicken pox, influenza (flu), and polio. Vaccines are given by needle injection (a shot), by mouth, or sprayed into the nose. The process of getting a vaccine is called vaccination or immunization.

When a person gets a vaccine, the body's [immune system](#) mounts an [immune response](#) that protects the body against the disease. In this way, the immune system learns to defend the body if the person is later exposed to the disease. Most vaccines are designed so that a person never gets a particular disease or only gets a mild case of the disease.

Vaccines not only protect individuals from disease, they protect communities as well. When most people in a community get immunized against a disease, there is little chance of a disease outbreak.

Are vaccines safe?

Yes. Vaccines are safe and effective. Some people may experience side effects from vaccines, but these are generally minor (for example, soreness at the location of an injection or a mild fever) and go away within a few days. Severe reactions to vaccines are rare. Before getting a vaccine, talk to your health care provider about the benefits of the vaccine and possible side effects.

Is there a vaccine against HIV?

Testing is underway on experimental vaccines to prevent and treat HIV, but no HIV vaccines are approved for use outside of [clinical trials](#). For more information about experimental HIV vaccines, read the AIDSinfo fact sheets [What is a Preventive HIV Vaccine?](#) and [What is a Therapeutic HIV Vaccine?](#)

Even though there are no vaccines to prevent or treat HIV, people with HIV can benefit from vaccines against other diseases.

Which vaccines are recommended for people with HIV?

The following vaccines are recommended for people with HIV:

- Hepatitis B
- Human papillomavirus (HPV), for those up to age 26
- Influenza (flu)
- Meningococcal
- Pneumococcal (pneumonia)
- Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough). A single vaccine called Tdap protects adolescents and adults against these three diseases.

Additional vaccines may be recommended for a person with HIV based on the person's age, previous vaccinations, risk factors for a particular disease, or certain HIV-related factors.

People with HIV work with their health care providers to determine which vaccines they should receive and when they should receive them.

What about travel and immunizations?

Regardless of destination, all travelers should be up to date on routine vaccinations. People who plan to travel outside the United States may need to be vaccinated against diseases that are present in other parts of the world, such as cholera or yellow fever.

If you have HIV, talk to your health care provider about any vaccines you may need before you travel.

To prepare for your trip, read information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on [Travelers with Weakened Immune Systems](#).

This fact sheet is based on information from the following sources:

From CDC, the National Institutes of Health, and the HIV Medicine Association of the Infectious Diseases Society of America:

- Guidelines for the Prevention and Treatment of Opportunistic Infections in Adults and Adolescents with HIV: [Recommended Immunization Schedule for Adults and Adolescents with HIV Infection](#)

From CDC:

- [Health Information for International Travel: Chapter 5: Travelers with Additional Considerations: Immunocompromised Travelers](#)

From Vaccines.gov:

- [Vaccine Basics](#)