

# OUR BEST SHOT:

## The Importance of Vaccines for Older Adults

### VACCINES



#### QUICK GUIDE TO VACCINATION FOR ADULTS AGES 65+

Vaccines are an important step in protecting your health and the health of your family. They are one of our best defenses against many infectious diseases and have saved millions of lives. This QUICK GUIDE outlines the symptoms and potential complications of some of the most common infectious diseases, lays out the recommended vaccines for adults ages 65+, and provides a tear-off vaccine tracker for your wallet to help you organize your vaccine history.

Bacteria / Virus	How It Spreads	Symptoms Can Include	Complications
<b>Influenza (Flu)</b>	Respiratory virus that spreads through droplets — from coughing, sneezing, or talking — that land on other people or objects they then touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fever*/feeling feverish</li> <li>● Cough</li> <li>● Sore throat</li> <li>● Runny or stuffy nose</li> <li>● Muscle or body aches</li> <li>● Headaches</li> <li>● Fatigue</li> <li>● Vomiting or diarrhea (mostly in kids)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Most recover in several days to less than 2 weeks</li> <li>● Some may develop pneumonia, bronchitis, and sinus &amp; ear infections</li> <li>● Can worsen existing diseases</li> <li>● Can trigger heart attacks or strokes</li> <li>● Can lead to hospitalization and even death</li> </ul>
<b>Pneumococcus (Pneumonia)</b>	One of many germs that can cause pneumonia. Pneumococcus is a bacteria that is spread through direct contact with saliva or mucus. People can carry the bacteria in their nose without symptoms, while others develop illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fever* and chills</li> <li>● Cough</li> <li>● Rapid breathing or difficulty breathing</li> <li>● Chest pain</li> <li>● Confusion or low alertness in older adults</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lung infections</li> <li>● Sinus and ear infections</li> <li>● Blood stream infection</li> <li>● Infection of brain and spinal cord lining (meningitis)</li> <li>● Heart infection (pericarditis)</li> <li>● Blockage of airway to lungs</li> <li>● Lung collapse</li> <li>● Abscess in lungs</li> <li>● Hospitalization and death</li> </ul>

Bacteria / Virus	How It Spreads	Symptoms Can Include	Complications
<b>SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19)</b>	Respiratory virus that spreads similarly to the flu but that is also airborne — entering the body through the nose, mouth, and eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fever* or chills</li> <li>● Cough</li> <li>● Shortness of breath or trouble breathing</li> <li>● Sore throat</li> <li>● Fatigue</li> <li>● Muscle or body aches</li> <li>● Headache</li> <li>● Loss of taste or smell</li> <li>● Congestion or runny nose</li> <li>● Nausea or vomiting</li> <li>● Diarrhea</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Most people have mild symptoms but some become severely ill. Older adults and people with compromised immune systems and underlying chronic conditions are at highest risk</li> <li>● Complications can include worsening of chronic disease symptoms, hospitalization, and even death</li> <li>● Some people suffer from “long COVID,” with symptoms lasting for months to even years</li> </ul>
<b>Tetanus</b>	Bacteria that enters the body through a deep flesh wound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Spasms &amp; stiffness of jaw, neck, and stomach muscles</li> <li>● Difficulty swallowing</li> <li>● Painful body spasms</li> <li>● Fever* &amp; sweating</li> <li>● Raised blood pressure</li> <li>● Rapid heart rate</li> <li>● Locking of neck &amp; jaw muscles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bacteria produces a powerful toxin that impairs the nervous system</li> <li>● Complications persist until toxins clear — sometimes taking several months</li> <li>● Can interfere with ability to breathe and lead to death</li> </ul>
<b>Diphtheria</b>	While relatively uncommon, a bacteria that spreads through droplets — from coughing, sneezing, or talking — that land on other people or objects they then touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Weakness</li> <li>● Sore throat</li> <li>● Fever*</li> <li>● Swollen glands in neck</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bacteria attaches to the lining of the respiratory system and produces toxins</li> <li>● Toxins destroy healthy tissue and form coating that builds up and makes it hard to breathe and swallow</li> <li>● Can cause lung infections</li> <li>● Toxins can get into blood stream and damage heart, kidneys, and nerves</li> <li>● Can cause paralysis and death</li> </ul>

Bacteria / Virus	How It Spreads	Symptoms Can Include	Complications
<b>Pertussis</b> (Whooping cough)	Respiratory bacteria that spreads through droplets — from coughing, sneezing, talking, and even sharing breathing space	<b>EARLY:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mild, occasional cough</li> <li>Low-grade fever*</li> <li>Apnea (pause in breathing)</li> <li>Runny nose</li> </ul> <b>AFTER 1 to 2 WEEKS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rapid coughing fits</li> <li>Distinct “whoop” sounding cough</li> <li>Vomiting &amp; exhaustion after coughing fits</li> </ul> Older children and adults may not have symptoms but can still spread the illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bacteria attaches to the lining of upper respiratory system and produces toxins</li> <li>Can be very serious and even lead to death, especially in babies who are too young for vaccination</li> <li>Weight loss</li> <li>Passing out</li> <li>Rib fractures</li> <li>Convulsions</li> <li>Apnea</li> <li>Brain infection</li> <li>Hospitalization and death</li> </ul>
<b>Varicella zoster</b> (Shingles)	Chicken pox virus that lies dormant and can be reactivated many years later as a shingles infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pain, itching, or tingling before rash appears</li> <li>Rash that commonly occurs as stripe around left or right side of body, on side of face, or near eye</li> <li>Fever*</li> <li>Headache</li> <li>Chills</li> <li>Upset stomach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN) — often severe and debilitating pain where rash occurred</li> <li>Loss of vision and blindness</li> <li>Pneumonia</li> <li>Hearing problems</li> <li>Brain inflammation</li> <li>Death</li> </ul>

*\* In adults ages 65+, a single temperature reading higher than 100°F (37.8°C), multiple readings above 99°F (37.2°C), or a rise in temperature greater than 2°F (1.1°C) above the person’s normal temperature may be a sign of infection. Normal body temperatures and fever temperatures can be lower in older adults than in younger adults.*

## RECOMMENDED IMMUNIZATIONS FOR ADULTS AGES 65+

Disease	Ages 65+
<b>Influenza</b> (Flu)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 dose every year of an enhanced influenza vaccine — either a high-dose or adjuvanted — if available</li> </ul> <p><i>If an enhanced vaccine is not available, any age appropriate flu vaccine is better than no vaccine</i></p>
<b>Pneumococcal</b> (Pneumonia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 dose PCV15 followed by PPSV23 or 1 dose PCV20</li> </ul> <p><i>People who have previously received PCV13 should consult with their healthcare professional to see if any additional doses are needed</i></p>
<b>SARS-CoV-2</b> (COVID-19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial vaccine series and booster for everyone ages 5+</li> </ul> <p><i>To see if you qualify for another booster or for any new vaccines as they become available, go to <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html">www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html</a></i></p>
<b>Tetanus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 dose of Tdap if you haven't had one as an adult</li> <li>1 Td or Tdap booster every 10 years</li> </ul>
<b>Diphtheria</b>	
<b>Pertussis</b> (Whooping cough)	
<b>Varicella zoster</b> (Shingles)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 doses RZV vaccine 2 – 6 months apart if haven't yet received this vaccine</li> </ul> <p><i>Previous shingles infection or vaccination with previous live vaccine are not relevant</i></p>



**People with certain risk factors** due to health, job, or lifestyle that are not listed here, may need additional vaccines including varicella (chicken pox), hepatitis A, hepatitis B, meningococcal (meningitis), and Hib (haemophilus influenza type b) vaccines. Talk to your healthcare professional to see if you need any of these vaccines.



**If you are traveling outside of the U.S.**, you may need additional vaccines. Ask your healthcare professional about which vaccines you need at least 6 weeks before you travel.

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CUT

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Birth date \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact information \_\_\_\_\_

Medical information (allergies, vaccine reactions, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

## Vaccine Tracker

Vaccine	Vaccine Type	Date	Next Dose Due
Pneumonia			
Td or Tdap booster			
Shingles			
COVID-19	COVID-19 vaccines and boosters should be recorded on your COVID-19 vaccination record by the vaccine provider		

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## Influenza Tracker

Vaccine Type	Date	Next Dose Due

## Helpful Resources

Learn more about what vaccines are recommended for you, how they work, and more at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines).

Report vaccine reactions to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) at [www.vaers.hhs.gov](http://www.vaers.hhs.gov) or by phone at 800-822-7967.

Get helpful resources on vaccination in older adults at [www.agingresearch.org/OurBestShot](http://www.agingresearch.org/OurBestShot)



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[www.agingresearch.org](http://www.agingresearch.org)

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The Alliance for Aging Research is the leading non-profit organization dedicated to accelerating the pace of scientific discoveries and their application in order to vastly improve the universal human experience of aging and health.