

Six Things to Know About Vaccines

September 14 2020 11:06 AM



(SPRINGFIELD, DECATUR, LITCHFIELD, SHELBYVILLE, O'FALLON, EFFINGHAM, BREESE, GREENVILLE, HIGHLAND, IL) – With flu season approaching and efforts underway on the creation of a coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine, now is the time to educate yourself on the importance of vaccinations.

The HSHS Illinois hospitals of HSHS St. John's Hospital in Springfield; HSHS St. Mary's Hospital in Decatur; HSHS St. Francis Hospital in Litchfield; HSHS Good Shepherd Hospital in Shelbyville; HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital in O'Fallon, HSHS St.

Anthony's Memorial Hospital in Effingham; HSHS Holy Family Hospital in Greenville, and HSHS St. Joseph's Hospitals in Breese and Highland want to remind everyone of the valuable role vaccinations play in keeping your family as safe as possible.

“Now more than ever, it is important to get your flu vaccination this year,” said Dr. Alicia Altheimer, HSHS Medical Group family medicine physician. “The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a flu shot for everyone over six months old. By getting your flu vaccine, you can help prevent hospitals from having to help those suffering from severe effects of influenza at the same time that they are helping those hospitalized with COVID-19.”

According to guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), here are six things to know about vaccines:

Everyone needs vaccines throughout their lives to help protect against serious diseases. Every year, thousands of Americans get sick from diseases that could be prevented by vaccines, sometimes leading to hospitalization and even death. Immunization is the best protection against these diseases. The CDC and other medical experts update vaccine recommendations every year based on the latest research and science. To learn what vaccines you should have, visit [cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules).

Outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases can and do still happen in communities across the U.S.

Vaccines have greatly reduced infectious diseases that once regularly harmed or killed many infants, children and adults. However, the germs that cause vaccine-preventable disease still exist and can be spread to people who are not protected by vaccines. For example, the CDC reports that even though measles was declared to be eliminated from the U.S. in 2000, it is still common in other countries and as such, unvaccinated travelers have contracted measles abroad and spread the disease to others in the U.S. upon return, leading to a number of outbreaks in recent years. It is important to remember that vaccinations not only protect the person who gets the vaccine, but also helps to keep diseases from spreading to others, like family members, neighbors, classmates and other members of your communities.

The CDC and FDA take many steps to make sure vaccines are very safe.

People sometimes express concern about the safety of vaccines. Before a vaccine is approved for use in the U.S., it goes through careful testing to make sure it is safe and effective. Highly trained scientists and doctors at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) evaluate the results of these studies. The sites where vaccines are made are also inspected by the FDA to ensure they follow strict guidelines. Once a vaccine is licensed, the FDA and CDC continue to monitor its use and make sure there are no safety concerns. Vaccines can cause mild side effects, like any medication, but

typically go away within a few days. Severe, long-lasting side effects from vaccines are rare.

Vaccines give you the power to protect your children from getting sick. Immunization has had an enormous impact on improving the health of children in the United States. The CDC shares that vaccination is one of the best ways parents can protect infants, children and teens from 16 potentially harmful diseases. Vaccine-preventable diseases can be very serious, may require hospitalization or even be deadly — especially in infants and young children. To see if your child is up-to-date, visit [cdc.gov/vaccines/parents](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents) and talk to your doctor.

You can make sure your baby is born with protection by getting vaccinated when you are pregnant.

Pregnant mothers share everything with their baby. That means when the you get vaccinated during pregnancy you are passing some protection on to your baby in the first few months of life when they are too young to build immunity on their own. The CDC recommends you get whooping cough and flu vaccines during each pregnancy to help protect yourself and your developing baby. For more information visit [cdc.gov/vaccines/pregnancy](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pregnancy) and talk to your doctor at your next appointment.

Vaccines aren't just for children. They can help adults stay healthy too – especially if they have health conditions.

Even if you got all your vaccines as a child, the protection from some vaccines can wear off over time. You may also be at risk for other diseases due to your age, job, lifestyle, travel or health conditions. Adults with chronic conditions like asthma/COPD, heart disease, and diabetes are more likely to get complications from certain diseases. Vaccination is an important part of staying healthy your whole life. Adults can also take a vaccine quiz to see what vaccines are recommended at <https://www2.cdc.gov/nip/adultimmsched>, then discuss the results with your health care provider.

For more information on vaccinations, visit [cdc.gov/vaccines](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines).