

WellNet Interactive's Healthy Newsletter

August 2011

Immunization Awareness Month

Vaccines aren't just for kids. Here's why grown-ups need them, too.

Think of vaccines and you might envision teary-eyed kids at the doctor's office or flu clinic getting a cartoon character bandage on their arm after getting a shot. But there are plenty of reasons adults should get vaccines too. The vaccines you need as an adult depend on everything from your age and lifestyle to high-risk medical conditions, travel plans, and which shots you've had in the past.

The best reasons to get vaccinated are to protect yourself and to protect the people around you.

- **You may no longer be protected.** You may have received a vaccine as a child. But some vaccines require a booster if you want to remain protected. Protection may not be life-long for diseases like pertussis (whooping cough) or tetanus, which is usually given with the diphtheria toxoid. The CDC recommends a booster for the latter every 10 years after an initial childhood series.
- **Getting vaccines helps protect your kids -- especially babies too young for vaccines.** Whooping cough vaccines are recommended for people who have contact with young babies. The same is true for the flu vaccine.
- **Some vaccines are just for adults.** The shingles vaccine is a good example. Shingles (also known as herpes zoster or zoster) is caused by a reactivation of the chickenpox virus. It can cause a severe and painful skin rash. The risk for shingles increases as a person ages. The vaccine is recommended for adults 60 and older.
- **You may need them when you travel.** Headed to the developing world? You may run into illnesses you'd never find at home. You can check the CDC's web site for details about what you may need for your destination.
- **Everyone needs a flu vaccine, every year.** The CDC recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get a flu vaccine annually if they do not have a medical reason not to receive the vaccine. Each year's vaccination is designed to protect against the three strains of influenza anticipated to be most commonly circulated in the upcoming flu season.



YOGURT BREAKFAST PARFAIT

Ingredients:

- 1 cup low-fat vanilla yogurt
- 1/2 cup crunchy low-fat cereal or granola, divided
- 1/2 cup fresh fruit, sliced (such as strawberries, blueberries, pineapple)

Preparation:

1. To assemble parfait, begin with yogurt in the bottom of a bowl or tall glass.
2. Add 2 tablespoons cereal and 1/4 cup fruit. Repeat.
3. Top with the remaining 2 tablespoons of cereal.



- **You didn't get fully vaccinated as a child.** Not everyone was, or is, fully vaccinated as a child. If you didn't get vaccines for things like measles, mumps, and rubella or chickenpox (or varicella) as a child -- or any of those diseases themselves -- you need them as an adult. And don't forget.
- **Newer vaccines have been developed.** Some vaccinations recommended for adults are fairly new. Although the rate of adults being vaccinated with newer vaccines is increasing, awareness remains a challenge.
- **You're going back to college.** The downturn has forced many adults back to school. But many colleges require proof of routine vaccinations. You may not have those records. Your parents may not have those records. And your childhood doctor may no longer be practicing. It's OK to repeat a vaccine. But, it's "a hassle and cost" that could be prevented by keeping good records.
- **You work in the health care profession.** Health care providers are exposed to all sorts of potential infections, as well as blood and bodily fluids. Most are required to have not only a complete vaccination series and evidence of immunity, but also to get annual influenza vaccination. This includes things like measles, mumps, rubella (MMR), and hepatitis B.
- **You have asthma, heart, lung disease, diabetes, or other chronic disease.** Or you smoke cigarettes. Or your immune system is otherwise compromised. The pneumococcal vaccine helps prevent serious disease such as pneumonia, meningitis, and blood infection caused by the bacterium *Streptococcus pneumoniae*.