

Audience: Healthcare Professionals

~ 550 words

Last Updated: 3/3/14

Your Vaccine Recommendation is a Critical Factor in Protecting Patient Health

Patients trust you to give them the best counsel on how to protect their health. You know that immunization is an important preventive measure – but it’s unlikely that getting vaccinated is on the radar for your adult patients. Your strong recommendation is critical in ensuring that they get the vaccines they need to help them stay healthy.

Adults are not getting the vaccines they need. The latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows that vaccination rates for adults are extremely low (*National Health Interview Survey, 2012*). For example, rates for Tdap and zoster vaccination are 20% or less for adults who are recommended to get them. Even high risk groups are not getting the vaccines they need - only 20% of adults 64 years or younger who are high risk for complications from pneumococcal disease are vaccinated. This means that each year tens of thousands of adults needlessly suffer, are hospitalized, and even die as a result of diseases that could be prevented by vaccines.

Most adults don’t realize that they need vaccines. A recent national survey revealed that most adults were not aware of recommended vaccines beyond influenza.

Your patients are likely to get the vaccines you recommend to them. Clinicians are the most valued and trusted source of health information for adults. Your patients rely on you to let them know which vaccines are necessary and right for them.

“Since adults aren’t thinking about vaccines, we need ALL healthcare professionals to use every patient encounter as an opportunity to assess whether any vaccines are needed,” Dr. Anne Schuchat, director of CDC’s National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases.

If the patient is due for a vaccine, make a strong recommendation that you advise getting the vaccine because it can help protect them against a disease that could be serious. For some patients, this may be sufficient information to accept the vaccine. Others may want to learn more about the vaccine and why it is right for them. For these patients, *sharing* the following can help them make an informed decision.

- **Share the reasons why the recommended vaccine is right for the patient given his or her age, health status, or other risk factors.**
- **Highlight your own experiences with vaccines (personal or in your practice) to reinforce the benefits and strengthen confidence in vaccination.**

- **Address patient questions and any concerns about the vaccine, including side effects, safety, and vaccine effectiveness in plain and understandable language.**
- **Remind patients that many of the diseases prevented by vaccines are common in the U.S. and can be serious – and getting vaccinated can protect them and their loved ones.**
- **Explain the potential costs of getting the disease, including serious health effects, time lost (missing work, activities, and family events), and financial costs.**

Some patients may need additional time to consider information about vaccines or want more details than can be provided during a single office visit. There are a number of things you can do to help these patients stay on track with recommended vaccinations.

- Emphasize the ease and benefits of getting vaccinated during the current visit.
- Provide educational materials or trusted websites for them to review.
- Send reminders about needed vaccines.
- Document the conversation and continue the discussion at the next visit.

To download free patient education materials or find resources on addressing patient questions and concerns about adult vaccines, visit: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/adults.