

Adults with COPD/Asthma: Vaccinations are an Important Part of Protecting Your Health



Having a chronic health condition doesn't mean you have to lose control over your health. Every day you take steps, like taking your medicine, carrying your inhaler, and minimizing your exposure to triggers, to manage your COPD or asthma and ensure the healthiest possible future. What if there was also something you could do just once a year that could also help protect your health? There is—you can make sure you are up-to-date on vaccines to protect against a number of common diseases, some of which may be even more serious to you because of your COPD or asthma.

A recent national survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed that most U.S. adults are not even aware that they need vaccines throughout their lives to protect against serious diseases like pertussis, hepatitis, shingles, and pneumococcal disease. Some vaccines you received as a child may require a booster, and as you get older, there may be other diseases you are at increased risk for based on your job, where you travel, and other factors.

Each year, thousands of adults needlessly suffer, are hospitalized, and even die from diseases that could be prevented by vaccines. If you're living with a chronic condition like COPD or asthma, getting vaccinated is even more important because you are at an increased risk for serious health problems

from certain vaccine-preventable diseases like influenza, which is why your yearly flu shot is so important.

COPD and asthma can cause your airways to swell and become blocked with mucus, making it hard to breathe. Certain vaccine-preventable diseases can also increase the swelling of your airways and lungs. The combination of the two can lead to pneumonia and other serious respiratory diseases. That is why it is important to make sure you are up-to-date on your pneumococcal and Tdap vaccines.

Talk to your doctor or other healthcare professional to make sure you have all the vaccines you need.

The good news is that getting vaccinated is easier than you think. Adults can get vaccines at doctors' offices, pharmacies, workplaces, health clinics, and health departments. Visit vaccine.healthmap.org to find a vaccine provider near you. Most health insurance plans cover the cost of recommended vaccines—a call to your insurance provider can give you the details.

What vaccines do you need?

If you have asthma or COPD, it is recommended that you get:

- Flu vaccine every year to protect against seasonal flu
- Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine to protect against serious pneumococcal diseases

In addition, all adults need:

- Tdap vaccine to protect against whooping cough and tetanus
- Zoster vaccine to protect against shingles if you are 60 years and older

You may also need other vaccines based on your age, health conditions, occupation, and other factors. The CDC offers a short quiz at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adultquiz to help determine which vaccines are recommended for you. For more information about adult vaccines, visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults.