



Immunization Awareness

For Service members and their Families

Important Facts:

- Vaccines are used to immunize (protect) individuals from certain diseases. Vaccines are important tools used to protect the health of Service members, their families, and the public,
- Some diseases spread easily from person to person, especially where people are in close contact with one another.
- Some infections acquired by human or animal contact, consuming contaminated food or drinking water, or through the bite of infected insects can be prevented by vaccination.
- Other diseases such as anthrax, small pox, and the plague can be spread through the use of biological warfare agents.
- Vaccines provide a safe and effective means of preventing many disease threats to personal health and military readiness.

How do we know the vaccines used by the Department of Defense are safe?

The Department of Defense (DoD) is confident that vaccines used by the DoD are safe because they are licensed and approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

A list of current vaccines currently used by the DoD to protect its Service members from disease available from the Military Vaccine Agency:

<http://www.vaccines.mil/default.aspx?cnt=disease/diseaseHome>

More information on the safety of vaccines is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Vaccine Safety website:

http://www.cdc.gov/od/science/iso/general_info/overview.htm

Why are there routine adult immunization requirements?

Immunizations, important for disease prevention in children and adults, are especially important for personnel deployed to locations where there is increased possibility of acquiring certain diseases. Routine adult immunization recommendations are established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). Vaccine recommendations for children, adolescents and adults are based on severity of the disease as well as the possibility of

exposure to the disease. These risks vary depending on travel to foreign countries, individual health and risk behavior; and the ability of a disease to spread from one person to another. These recommendations are also dependent upon the availability of a safe and effective vaccine. In some cases, vaccines administered as a child do not have to be repeated as adults. However, not all vaccines given during childhood will provide protection to adults.

Other useful points are:

- Acquiring a disease and successfully recovering from it, sometimes provides life-long protection (immunity) against acquiring the disease a second time – sometimes booster immunizations are needed.
- It is fairly common for an adult to forget the vaccinations they received and the illnesses they had as a child;
- Vaccines for certain diseases were not available when some adults were children.
- Effective protection provided by some vaccines may gradually decrease over time; and
- With age, adults become more susceptible to some serious diseases caused by common infections (e.g., influenza, pneumococcus).

What immunizations are routinely administered to adults?

The routine adult immunizations recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for 2007-2008 are:

- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (in the U.S, the vaccines are mixed together and administered as a single immunization called "MMR")
- Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (whooping cough) that are mixed together and called "Tdap
- Varicella (chickenpox)
- Influenza (seasonal, given annually)
- Human Papillomavirus – or HPV (for females only)
- Shingles (a painful outbreak of rash or blisters caused by Varicella zoster virus which also causes chickenpox))

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A collaborative effort between the Air Force Institute for Operational Health, the Deployment Health Clinical Center, Force Health Protection and Readiness, the Navy Environmental Health Center, the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine, and the OUSD(P&R)/Military Family and Community Policy



- Pneumococcal, which most commonly causes pneumonia and meningitis (an infection of the lining of the brain).

Many of the vaccine listed above are recommended only for specific age groups. Under certain conditions (i.e. increased disease exposure risk, certain occupations, or immunodeficiencies or age), the ACIP also recommends immunization for Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Meningococcal, and other diseases.

Additionally, the CDC and the DoD recommend additional vaccines when traveling to areas where other diseases are common or when there is a potential for bioterrorism. Some of these include Yellow Fever, Japanese Encephalitis, Typhoid, Smallpox, and Anthrax.

Why are certain vaccinations mandatory only for the military?

Unlike the civilian population, the military must function in locations where there may be an increased risk of acquiring a number of natural and manmade diseases. To provide optimum protection to our Service members and to help achieve mission objectives, force health protection measures (to include the use of certain vaccines) are established. Failure to comply with these measures places the individual, the unit, and the mission at risk. For this reason, force health protection measures, including the administration of vaccines, are required for Service members. The DoD wants to ensure every Service member is well-equipped and healthy to perform at the highest level possible.

What, if any, health risks are associated with getting multiple vaccines at one time?

The Department of Defense follows national immunization guidelines for Service members, DoD civilians, and other beneficiaries, which were established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These guidelines include the administration of multiple vaccines at the same time or close to the same time (often referred to as "concurrent immunizations"). The Armed Forces Epidemiological Board (now called the Defense Health Board) has studied this issue. After closely studying the scientific data, the Board recommended to the DoD that the administration of multiple vaccines at the same time was safe and effective. They further stated that standard clinical practice and the recommendations of multiple scientific and professional medical societies supported the practice of concurrent immunizations.

Is it safe for females to be vaccinated if they are pregnant or think they may be pregnant?

Good medical practice generally requires some vaccinations to be postponed during pregnancy, unless they are clearly needed – that is, the risk of disease to the mother and child outweighs any risks associated with the administration of the vaccine. If you are a woman and are unsure if you are pregnant, you should request a pregnancy test from your medical provider before being vaccinated. If pregnant, you should discuss your personal risks associated with immunizations with your doctor.

Where Do I Get More Information?

DoD Force Health Protection and Readiness (FHP & R)

Phone: (800) 497-6261
<http://fhp.osd.mil>

DoD Deployment Health Clinical Center (DHCC)

Phone: (866) 559-1627
<http://www.pdhealth.mil/>

DeployMed ReasearchLINK, Research on Vaccines and Protective Medications
[Research Topic](#)

U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (USACHPPM)

Phone: (800) 222-9698
<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil>

Navy Environmental Health Center (NEHC)

Phone: (757) 953-0700
<http://www-nehc.med.navy.mil>

Air Force Institute for Operational Health (AFIOH)

Phone: (888) 232-3764

Military Vaccine Agency

Phone: 1-877-GET-VACC (1-877-438-8222)
<http://www.vaccines.mil>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
www.cdc.gov/nip,
Phone: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

- Department of Defense 24/7 Vaccine Clinical Call Center,
1-866-210-6469

Reproductive Health and Military Deployment
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