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# Get shot

**Flu is not the only ailment that might merit a preventive shot.**

By **RACHEL SASLOW**

**A**LL the vaccine buzz is about the H1N1 virus right now, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States is reminding people to make sure ALL of their vaccinations are up-to-date. The CDC encourages adults to guard against vaccine-preventable diseases such as shingles, human papillomavirus (HPV), tetanus, meningitis, whooping cough and pneumococcal disease.

A survey released last month by the US National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) found that about three-quarters of adults interviewed were extremely or very familiar with only two vaccine-preventable diseases: influenza and chickenpox.

Young adults, defined as ages 18 to 26 for the survey, tend to be especially complacent about vaccination. "This is not that surprising, because they have been well-protected against these diseases and have little or no experience with the manifestations," says Susan J. Rehm, the medical director of NFID.

For example, less than half of the young adults surveyed knew that tetanus causes lockjaw and that one should be vaccinated against tetanus every 10 years; 84% of adults 50 and older knew this.

Shingles, which is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox and results in a painful, sometimes debilitating rash, strikes fear into people who have seen its effects firsthand, but that hasn't translated into mass vaccination: Only 7% who are supposed to receive the shot – people age 60 or older – have done so. The shingles vaccine has only been approved by the Food and Drug Administration since 2006.

"In my adult practice, if you say the word 'shingles' in that visit, you can tell immediately if that patient has had direct contact with somebody who has had shingles," says Dr Robert H. Hopkins. "If they've had direct contact with somebody who's had shingles in their family, in their neighbourhood, most of them will say, 'I don't care what it costs, I want to prevent it.'"

At a recent news conference, Hopkins and other doctors tried mightily to stay focused on their message of encouraging adults to get vaccinated, but they kept bumping into healthcare-reform issues: Discussion of the

pricey shingles vaccine brought up questions about prescription drug costs. The role of primary care doctors in educating patients about appropriate vaccines led to discussion of the shortage of general practitioners; reasons for that shortage include a medical system that rewards specialised services over prevention.

Vaccination is a perfect example of good preventive, evidence-based medicine, said CDC physician Anne Schuchat: "There's a need for culture change - we worry about things when they're really bad rather than taking care of prevention and wellness."

## When to get shot

**Preventable disease:** Pneumococcal disease - a bacterial infection that can cause pneumonia. **Recommended vaccinations:** One dose for those age 65 and older, and for those with underlying medical conditions including heart disease, cancer, and alcoholism.

**Preventable disease:** Human papillomavirus (HPV) - a sexually transmitted infection that can lead to cervical cancer. **Recommended vaccinations:** Three-dose series over a six-month period for females age 11 to 26.

**Preventable disease:** Influenza - a virus that kills more people in the US than any other vaccine-preventable disease. **Recommended vaccinations:** Annual autumn vaccination for people older than 50, pregnant women, healthcare workers, and those with chronic medical conditions.

**Preventable disease:** Tetanus/diphtheria - Tetanus, sometimes called lockjaw, is a bacterial infection affecting the nervous system. Diphtheria is a bacterial infection that affects the upper respiratory tract. **Recommended vaccinations:** A combination booster every 10 years.

**Preventable disease:** Pertussis, or whooping cough - a highly contagious respiratory tract infection. **Recommended vaccinations:** Every adult should receive one dose of pertussis vaccine, which is given in combination with one of the tetanus/diphtheria boosters.

**Preventable disease:** Hepatitis B - a liver disease that, if it develops into a chronic infection, can cause cirrhosis, liver cancer, and death. **Recommended vaccinations:** Three-dose series over a six-month period for unvaccinated people who have HIV or are at

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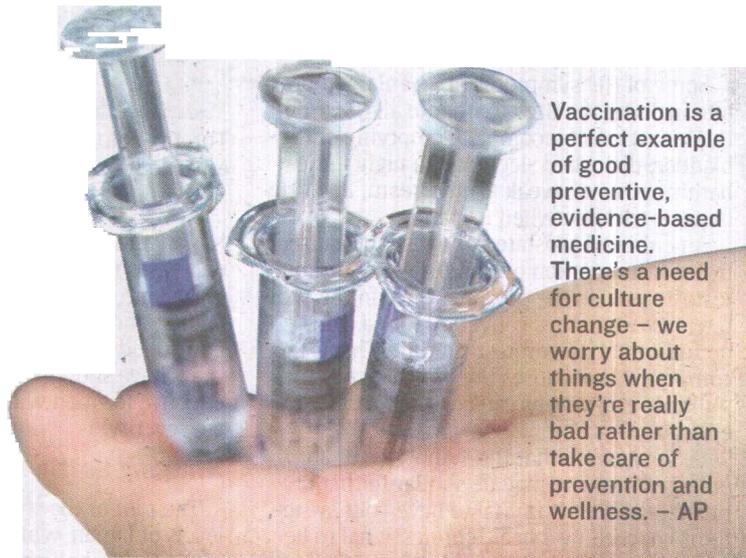
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risk for sexually transmitted disease.

Preventable disease: Shingles - a painful skin rash. Recommended vaccinations: One dose at age 60 or older.

Preventable disease: Meningococcal disease, or meningitis - an infection of the fluid that surrounds the spinal cord and the brain. Recommended vaccinations: One dose for adults with certain risk factors, such as living in close quarters or having a damaged spleen.- LAT-WP

■ Sources: *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (www.adultvaccination.org)*



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