

Staying Healthy with Diabetes: Be Wise, Immunize

If you have ever suffered a bad case of the flu, you probably don't want to do that again. And especially if you have diabetes, which makes it harder for your body to fight off the invasion of bad bugs and viruses.

Influenza (aka the "flu") is more than just a bad cold, says the US Center for Disease Control (CDC). "It's a serious illness that can lead to pneumonia and even death."

Since people with diabetes are more susceptible to the flu and pneumonia, it's time to think about getting immunized against them:

Influenza:

A review by the American Diabetes Association (ADA) "supports the fact that vaccination against influenza has been effective in reducing hospital admissions during influenza epidemics." Here are their recommendations:

Get a flu shot every year...

before flu season begins. September is the best time to get a flu vaccine if you live in the US, says the ADA. After you get immunized, the vaccine takes about two weeks to become effective.

Precaution if you are allergic to eggs.

Since eggs are used to make the influenza vaccine, experts advise you not to get the flu shot if you have an egg allergy.

Consider a flu shot before traveling outside of the US.

While the fall and winter months are typical flu season in the US, influenza appears year-round in tropical countries. April to September is flu season in the Southern Hemisphere.

Don't worry.

You cannot "catch" the flu from getting the vaccine. It contains no infectious viruses.

Pneumococcal vaccine:

This vaccine protects against serious lung infections (pneumonia). It also helps prevent deadly blood infections (bacteremia) and meningitis- a lethal inflammation of the membranes that cover the brain and spinal cord.

Get a pneumococcal shot any time during the year.

You can even get it at the same time you get your flu shot.

One pneumococcal vaccination is protective until age 65.

After age 65, consider getting a "booster" pneumococcal vaccination if it has been at least five years from your first shot, says the Centers for Disease Control.

Is there a downside to getting these vaccinations? Not if you want to stay out of the hospital and avoid life-threatening illnesses, say experts.