

Keeping a vaccine record is important – even for adults

If you have children or grandchildren, you know that children's immunization records are updated all the time. A lot of vaccines are given in the first few years of life, so keeping a careful history is important. Updated vaccination records are also required by many youth sports, camps, schools, and colleges.



But getting vaccines as an adult is trickier, especially when it comes to:

1. Knowing which vaccines you need and when, and
2. Making sure you have an up-to-date record of the vaccines you've received – similar to keeping a list of all the medicines and supplements you take.

For example, adults:

- Are usually vaccinated at different locations – perhaps at a doctor's office, at work, or through a community clinic or pharmacy.
- Are less likely to talk about vaccines during health visits (though COVID-19 may have helped to raise awareness) or know which vaccines are recommended. Doctors who don't offer vaccines may not think to ask about or educate their patients about vaccines and the diseases they prevent.
- Often have no single "keeper" of their vaccine record.



Why you need to track your vaccines

Here are a few reasons:

1. **Vaccines are the best way to protect yourself from serious illness.** Using a worksheet will help you keep track of the vaccines that are recommended for adults with heart disease and when you need them.
2. **Vaccines work best when they are given on time.** But it's not always easy to remember when you got a vaccine or when you are due for another unless you write it down. Do you remember the exact date of your last flu shot? What about your last tetanus shot? Keeping a vaccine record can help.
3. **Some vaccines are given as part of a series or require a booster** – an added dose of protection against infection over time. Writing down the date you received a vaccine and when the next dose is needed helps you gain the most benefit and protection against serious illness.



Vaccines simply aren't as easy to keep track of as an adult.

Many cardiology practices and other medical offices don't supply vaccines. If they do, it might be only one or two, not all that are recommended.

That means you may end up getting your **flu shot** at a pharmacy, a **COVID booster** through your public health department, and the **shingles vaccine** at your general doctor's office.

It's a lot to keep track of. Take time to write down the vaccines you get and when. Also, ask about ways to add this information to your medical record.

4. **You are in the best position to be in charge of your vaccine history.** There's no national organization that maintains vaccination records. COVID vaccine cards are a rare example of a widespread effort to:

- » Make sure people know exactly when, where and which COVID vaccine was given
- » Encourage everyone to know their vaccine status and keep their vaccine cards handy

Your vaccine record should include a history of all the vaccines you received - both as an adult and during childhood.



How to go about it

Staying organized will help you know which vaccines you've had and which you still need.

► **Keep track of all of the vaccines you receive.** After you get a vaccine, make a habit of writing down:

- **What vaccine was given** - this might include the type of vaccine, the manufacturer of the vaccine and/or the lot number or batch of vaccine you received.
- **When you received it** - the date and if any additional doses need to be scheduled so the vaccine works to protect you and others. For example, a tetanus booster is given every 10 years - sometimes sooner if you step on a rusty nail or get a bad scrape. Also, to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, you need the first vaccine doses and additional boosters.
- **Where you were vaccinated** - for example, a specific doctor's office, pharmacy, vaccine clinic.
- **Why it's recommended** - can help guard against related troubles or making your heart condition worse.

► **Make sure to update your health care team.**

Because there isn't a central place for vaccine information, and not all doctor's offices offer vaccines, share an updated list of the vaccines you've received at health visits. As with medications, vaccines should be included in your chart or electronic medical record.

If it's easier, you can also take a picture of vaccination receipts, which often include the vaccine name, dose, date given, and other information. You can then create a "vaccine folder" in your phone. Next time you're asked if you got your flu vaccine or COVID series/booster, you can pull up the information on your phone.



Use ACC's **Stay on Top of Your Vaccines** worksheet. It lists which vaccines are usually recommended for adults with heart disease or a history of stroke.



Vaccine resources you can use

There Are Vaccines You Need as an Adult - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/index.html

Get Vaccinated Before You Travel - CDC
www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/travel-vaccines.html

Tips for Finding Vaccine Records - Immunize.org in partnership with CDC
<https://vaccineinformation.org/finding-vaccine-records/>



For more information, visit [CardioSmart.org/HealthyLiving](https://www.cardiosmart.org/HealthyLiving).