

AGS Statement on Immunization in Older Adults

The American Geriatrics Society (AGS) recommends that older adults follow immunization recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in order to reduce their risks from vaccine-preventable illness. Currently, the CDC recommends that older adults remain up-to-date on vaccinations that prevent or mitigate the risks from the diseases listed in Table 1.

The AGS recommends that its members and other health professionals follow the CDC [Standards for Adult Immunization Practice](#). Geriatrics health professionals are pioneers in advanced-illness care for older individuals with a focus on championing interprofessional teams, eliciting personal care goals, and treating older people as whole persons. They are in a unique position to offer immunization-related information tailored to the maintenance and reduction of risks related to each individual's health conditions.

AGS believes that staying current with immunization recommendations is particularly important for adults ≥ 65 years old, because they are at increased risk of severe complications from vaccine-preventable illnesses. For example, influenza results in approximately 40,000 deaths annually in the US, nearly all of which are older adults. Likewise, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on older adults, especially those living in long-term care facilities.

The AGS also recommends that health professionals and the public remain up-to-date with CDC-recommended immunizations (CDC recommendations for all ages can be found [here](#)) given the role immunizations play in protecting the health of the public. Children should receive all vaccines they are eligible for to both protect themselves from serious illness and prevent the spread of illness to friends and family members of all ages. AGS believes that vaccines are a safe and effective way to protect all of us as we age and limit the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases.

New vaccines are assessed by a long-standing, rigorous, and transparent process through the US Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, where data is reviewed and evaluated before authorization. Before the FDA approves or provides emergency use authorization (EUA), a vaccine must go through three phases of clinical trials to ensure its safety and efficacy. However, clinical trial study populations may, at first, not sufficiently

Table 1: Diseases with a CDC Vaccine Recommendation for Americans Age 65+¹

COVID19 ²
<i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b
Hepatitis A
Hepatitis B
Herpes Zoster (Shingles)
Influenza
Measles, mumps, rubella
Meningococcal A, C, W, Y
Meningococcal B
Pneumococcal
Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis
Varicella (Chickenpox)

¹ [Adult Immunization Schedule by Vaccine and Age Group | CDC](#)

² [Stay Up to Date with your Vaccines | CDC](#)

represent older people, people of color, pregnant women, and children. Often special studies are needed to address these population. In light of the gaps in our knowledge that the lack of diversity in study populations create and to monitor for very rare events, the FDA monitors vaccines closely for any adverse events that did not come up during the clinical trials and to confirm the benefits of a vaccine outweigh any risks. CDC immunization guidance is reviewed and updated (if necessary) annually to take into account new data and information and ensure the best protection possible.

The AGS Guide to Common Immunizations for Older Adults, available through the AGS iGeriatrics App and [GeriatricsCareOnline.org](https://www.geriatricscareonline.org) is based on CDC guidance on specific vaccine recommendations for older adults. The AGS Health in Aging Foundation has created a suite of public education materials addressing immunization in older adults which can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

About the American Geriatrics Society

Founded in 1942, the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) is a nationwide, not-for-profit society of geriatrics healthcare professionals that has—for more than 75 years—worked to improve the health, independence, and quality of life of older people. Its nearly 6,000 members include geriatricians, geriatric nurses, social workers, family practitioners, physician assistants, pharmacists, and internists. The Society provides leadership to healthcare professionals, policymakers, and the public by implementing and advocating for programs in patient care, research, professional and public education, and public policy. For more information, visit [AmericanGeriatrics.org](https://www.AmericanGeriatrics.org).

About the Health in Aging Foundation

The Health in Aging Foundation is a national non-profit established in 1999 by the American Geriatrics Society to bring the knowledge and expertise of geriatrics healthcare professionals to the public. We are committed to ensuring that people are empowered to advocate for high-quality care by providing them with trustworthy information and reliable resources on [HealthinAging.org](https://www.HealthinAging.org). We also help nurture current and future geriatrics leaders by supporting opportunities to attend educational events and increase exposure to principles of excellence on caring for older adults. For more information or to support the Foundation's work, visit [HealthinAgingFoundation.org](https://www.HealthinAgingFoundation.org).