

Back to School: Quick Tips for Staying Healthy This School Year

The beginning of the school year can be a stressful time for anyone and it is important to take care of yourself.

Immunizations (also called shots or vaccines) are one way to start the school year right and help prevent dangerous and sometimes deadly diseases.

Immunization isn't just for kids – to stay protected against serious illnesses like the flu, measles, and pneumonia, adults need to get vaccinated, too. August, National Immunization Awareness Month, is a great time to promote vaccines and remind family, friends, and coworkers to stay up to date on their shots.

This month, learn more about the four (4) reasons why vaccinations are important, as well as three (3) tips for staying healthy in the new school year, including meal planning, finding creative ways to stay active and letting your mind and body rest/recharge.

There Are Vaccines You Need as an Adult

You may not realize that you need vaccines throughout your life. Adults need to keep their vaccinations up to date because immunity from childhood vaccines can wear off over time. You are also at risk for different diseases as an adult. Vaccination is one of the most convenient and safest preventive care measures available. All adults need:

- Influenza (flu) vaccine every year
- Td or Tdap vaccine



You may need other vaccines based on your age, health conditions, job, lifestyle, or travel habits. Learn more about what other vaccines may be recommended for you and talk to your healthcare professional about which vaccines are right for you. Use the Adult Vaccine Assessment Tool to learn which vaccines are recommended for adults based on age: <https://www2a.cdc.gov/nip/adultimmsched/>

4 Reasons Why Vaccines Are Important

In the U.S., vaccines have greatly reduced or eliminated many infectious diseases that once routinely killed or harmed infants, children, and adults. However, the viruses and bacteria that cause these diseases still exist and you can still get these diseases if you aren't vaccinated.

1. You May Be at Risk for Serious Disease

Every year thousands of adults in the U.S. become seriously ill and are hospitalized because of diseases that vaccines can help prevent. Many adults even die from these diseases. By getting vaccinated, you can help protect yourself from much of this unnecessary suffering.

2. You Can Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones from Disease

Vaccines can lower your chance of getting certain diseases. Vaccines work with your body's natural defenses to help you safely develop immunity to disease. This lowers your chances of getting certain diseases and suffering from their complications. For instance:

- Hepatitis B vaccine lowers your risk of liver cancer.
- HPV vaccine lowers your risk of cervical cancer.
- Flu vaccine lowers your risk of flu-related heart attacks or other flu-related complications from existing health conditions like diabetes and chronic lung disease.

3. Vaccines Lower Your Chance of Spreading Disease

Some people in your family or community may not be able to get certain vaccines due to their age or health condition. They rely on you to help prevent the spread of disease. Infants, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems (like those undergoing cancer treatment) are especially vulnerable to infectious disease. For example, newborn babies are too young to be vaccinated against whooping cough.

Unfortunately, whooping cough can be very dangerous or even deadly for them. Pregnant women should get the Tdap vaccine during every pregnancy to help protect their babies from whooping cough. Anyone who is around babies should be up to date with their whooping cough vaccine.

4. You Can't Afford to Get Sick

You have a busy life and too much responsibility to risk getting sick. Vaccines can help you stay healthy so you don't miss work. If you can avoid getting sick, you will have more time for your family, friends, and hobbies.

Getting recommended vaccines can give you some peace of mind. You will have the best possible protection available against a number of serious diseases.

3 Tips to Staying Healthy in the New School Year

In addition to keeping up to date on vaccines, it is also important to eat healthy, make time for physical activity, and take the time to relax and de-stress when possible. Below are some additional resources that can help get you through the start of the school year:

1. Meal Planning

Long hectic hours in the classroom call for meal planning. Be prepared with healthy snacks and meals. There is no wrong way to do meal planning! What works for you might not work for others. The goal is to find a process that is both enjoyable and effective. Meal planning will help ensure that meals are well-balanced and you have control over the ingredients that are used.

For example, plan to eat healthy breakfast followed by a mid-morning high-fiber snack, such as an apple or a small handful of almonds, for lunch have grilled chicken with veggies, a second healthy snack such as a plain low fat Greek yogurt with a cup of fresh or frozen raspberries, and a quick salad with chicken for dinner.

Meal Prep 101: <https://www.fitteacherproject.com/meal-prep-101/>

2. Stay Active

Going back to school doesn't mean you have to say farewell to outdoor fun. Dedicate some time out of your busy schedule to go for walks/runs with your dog, go for a bike ride in your neighborhood, plan hikes for the weekend, or join a group exercise class. For some it may mean getting up earlier than usual to get in some sort of physical activity. For example, set your alarm for 5:30am to exercise in the gym for half an hour before getting ready for school. The ability to rise and shine at the crack of dawn can be a little hard for some but try to wake up a few minutes earlier each morning to help you get into that routine. It may be painful at first but your internal clock will get into a routine!

If you miss a session or wake up late try doing something a bit quicker like squats, sit ups, lunges, or a short run before breakfast. If you can't get to the gym, plan your activities outside the classroom during breaks or lunch. Have a pair of walking shoes and go for a walk around campus and an extra set of workout clothes just in case a meeting is canceled and you can make it to the gym or go for a run.

How to Balance Fitness with a Busy Life: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/476896-balancing-fitness-with-a-busy-life/>

3. Let Your Mind and Body Rest

At least once a month, carve out a little time for yourself, say, an hour or two. Read the book you keep reaching for without interruption; catch that movie you've heard so much about; or simply enjoy a peaceful walk.

Stress Management: Breathing Exercises: <http://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/tc/stress-management-breathing-exercises-topic-overview#1>