



Kidney Q&A

4-12 months

Life Options Rehabilitation Program
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Q: Do I still need regular immunizations or flu shots?

A: Yes. When you have kidney failure, your immune system is weaker. This makes it vital for you to get immunizations and flu shots to help you stay healthy.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggest that people with kidney failure should be immunized for:

- Tetanus/diphtheria (Td)
- Measles/mumps/rubella (MMR)
- Hepatitis B (if you're on hemodialysis)
- Pneumonia (once in your lifetime)
- Flu (every year in October, before flu season)

The flu shot is safe for most people. It is made from flu virus that has been killed. You should not take the flu shot if you have a fever, but you can take it if you have an illness with no fever. Talk with your doctor if you are allergic to eggs, because there is egg protein in the flu shot. The most common side-effect from the flu shot is soreness. You can also get mild flu-like symptoms, if you've never had the flu or a flu shot before.

With Medicare Part B, you can get a flu and/or pneumonia shot free. If you have an HMO, you need to get the shot from the HMO. Most other insurance companies pay for all or part of these shots no matter where you get the shot.

What I can do to get the immunizations I need to stay healthy:

- Learn when I should have immunizations.
 - For adults, see www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/adult-schedule.pdf.
 - For those 18 and younger, see www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/child-schedule.pdf.
- Keep a record of all my immunizations.
- Be sure that any doctor who is going to give me a shot knows I have kidney failure so they can adjust the dose if they need to.
- Ask my dialysis clinic if they give flu and pneumonia shots or plan to get them from my doctor or health clinic.