

What is National Immunization Awareness Month?

Each year in August, National Immunization Awareness Month (NIAM) offers a chance to highlight the value of immunization (vaccination) for people of all ages. NIAM activities focus on encouraging all people to protect their health by getting vaccinated against infectious diseases.

Who should be immunized?

Immunizations aren't just for children; people of all ages need them throughout their lives.

- **Infants and children.** Vaccinating children according to the recommended schedule is one of the best ways to protect them from 14 harmful and potentially deadly diseases before their second birthdays.
- **Preteens and teens.** Preteens and teens are at risk for diseases like meningitis and human papillomavirus (HPV) cancers.
- **Adults.** Adults should stay up-to-date on vaccinations because their immunity from childhood vaccines can wear off over time. Adults are also at risk for different diseases than children and teens.
- **Pregnant women.** Before getting pregnant, a woman should be up-to-date on routine adult vaccines to help protect her and her unborn child from vaccine-preventable diseases like rubella.
- **Students.** Schools and colleges are a prime venue for transmitting vaccine-preventable diseases that can quickly to family and anyone with whom students come into contact.

Talk with your doctor about the vaccines you should get based on your health or other conditions.

Are vaccines safe?

Vaccines are tested and studied. They go through years of testing before the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) licenses them for use. Both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the FDA track the safety of all licensed vaccines. As a result, vaccines are one of the safest ways to protect your health.

If a vaccine has side effects, they are often mild and go away in a few days. The most common side effects include soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given. Severe side effects are very rare.

Mobile apps

- [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#)
- [CDC Vaccine Schedules](#)

Tips from our docs

This month's healthy tip is brought to you by **Pedro Cardona, MD**, our Medical Director.

The diseases that vaccines prevent can be dangerous, even deadly. Vaccines lower the risk of infection by working with the body's natural defenses to help it safely develop immunity to disease. When germs, such as bacteria or viruses, invade the body, they attack and multiply. This is called an infection, and the infection causes illness. The immune system then has to fight the infection. Once it fights off the infection, the body is left with a supply of cells that help recognize and fight that disease in the future.

Vaccines help develop immunity by imitating an infection, but this "imitation" infection does not cause illness. It helps the immune system develop the same response as it does to a real infection, so the body can recognize and fight the vaccine-preventable disease in the future. Sometimes, after getting a vaccine, the imitation infection can cause minor side effects, such as fever. These side effects are normal and should be expected as the body builds immunity.

More resources

- [CDC – National Immunization Awareness Month](#)
- [Immunization Action Coalition](#)