American Diabetes Association

Diabetes and Vaccinations Toolkit

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Resources in This Toolkit

Vaccination plays a vital role in protecting people living with diabetes from preventable illnesses. People living with diabetes face higher risks of complications from vaccine-preventable diseases, making timely immunization especially important. Although vaccines are strongly recommended for people living with diabetes, vaccination rates vary partly because of persistent myths, lingering doubts, and a lack of awareness.

The American Diabetes Association® (ADA) has created a comprehensive toolkit filled with resources and educational materials to support health care professionals in understanding the importance of vaccines for people with diabetes. These materials can also guide conversations with the people you see about recommended vaccines, safety, and timing during adulthood.

Skip ahead by selecting the titles you wish to learn more about.

Health Care Professional Resources

Includes a conversation guide to support meaningful vaccine discussions with the people you see, along with professional handouts and infographics offering clear, actionable recommendations aligned with national standards for people living with diabetes.

- Vaccination Guidelines for People Living with Diabetes
- Protect People with Diabetes with the Recommended Vaccines

Patient Education Resources

Help build vaccine confidence with patient-friendly handouts and infographics that explain the importance of immunizations, outline recommended vaccines, and guide people living with diabetes on how to stay protected.

- Talking with Your Doctor or Pharmacist About Vaccines
- Prevent, Protect, and Plan to Stay Healthy with Vaccinations
- Sick Day Guide for People with Diabetes
- Protect Yourself with Vaccines if You Have Diabetes
- Shield Yourself and Loved Ones Against Serious Disease
- Fighting the Flu and Protecting You

Use this toolkit to strengthen vaccine confidence, support informed conversations, and help protect people living with diabetes through timely immunization.

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Health Care Professional Resources

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Vaccination Guidelines
for People Living with Diabetes

Vaccines are a powerful tool that help people living with diabetes stay healthy. By protecting against serious infections, vaccines can reduce the chance of hospital visits, make diabetes easier to manage, and help prevent related complications.

Why Vaccines Are Important

- **Increased risk of infections:** Diabetes can weaken the immune system, making it harder for the body to fight infections.
- **Complications from illness:** Illnesses like the flu, pneumonia, and shingles can make it harder for people living with diabetes to manage blood glucose levels, leading to further complications.
- **Preventing hospitalizations:** Vaccines help prevent serious infections that could result in hospitalization, reducing health care costs and saving lives.

Recommended Vaccines

INFLUENZA (FLU SHOT)	
Why:	The flu can lead to severe illness, hospitalization, or even death. People living with diabetes are at greater risk of serious complications.
When:	Annually, before flu season, ideally in the early fall (September or October).
Possible side effects:	Mild side effects may include soreness at the injection site, fever, or fatigue.
Notes:	All people living with diabetes are recommended to receive the inactive or recombinant influenza vaccines. Using the live attenuated (nasal spray) vaccine in people living with diabetes is NOT recommended. Advise people to contact their primary care doctor if they have flu-like symptoms, especially if they are at high risk for complications, such as people living with diabetes. Antiviral medications can help reduce the severity and duration of the flu.

PNEUMOCOCCAL (PNEUMONIA)	
Why:	People living with diabetes are at increased risk for pneumonia and other infections caused by pneumococcus bacteria and may experience more severe complications.
When:	Timing depends on age, past vaccinations, and individual health needs. Encourage people living with diabetes to speak with their primary care doctor to create a personalized vaccine plan.
Possible side effects:	Mild fever, soreness at injection site, or fatigue.

HEPATITIS B	
Why:	People living with diabetes, especially those using insulin, may be more likely to get hepatitis B due to possible exposure from shared or improperly cleaned blood glucose equipment, and may also have a harder time recovering from the infection.
When:	Encourage people living with diabetes to speak with their primary care doctor about hepatitis B vaccination. In general, adults under the age of 60 should receive the vaccine, while those 60 years and older may be vaccinated based on their doctor's guidance and individual health needs.
Possible side effects:	Mild fever, pain at injection site, or headache.

SHINGLES (HERPES ZOSTER)	
Why:	Shingles can cause painful, long-lasting complications, especially for people over the age of 50 and those living with diabetes, who may face a higher risk of hospitalization, nerve pain, and slower recovery due to weakened immune response.
When:	Two doses of shingles vaccine are recommended, typically for adults 50 years and older, with the second dose given two to six months after the first.
Possible side effects:	Pain or swelling at the injection site, mild fever, or fatigue.

COVID-19	
Why:	People living with diabetes are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Vaccination helps prevent serious outcomes.
When:	Encourage people with diabetes to speak with their primary care doctor about when to get the COVID-19 vaccine and follow current recommendations for boosters and updates.
Possible side effects:	Mild side effects similar to the flu vaccine (e.g., fever, fatigue, sore arm).

Tdap (TETANUS, DIPHTHERIA, AND PERTUSSIS)	
Why:	Tdap is especially important for people living with diabetes, who are at higher risk for respiratory infections and tetanus, especially if they have frequent hospital visits, open wounds, or interact with children.
When:	One dose every 10 years.
Possible side effects:	Redness and pain at the injection site and low-grade fever.

RSV (RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS)	
Why:	RSV can lead to serious illness for people living with diabetes, especially if complications like kidney disease or neuropathy are present.
When:	Adults 75 years and older should receive one dose of an RSV vaccine. Adults 60–74 years old living with diabetes may also be eligible and should speak with their primary care doctor about timing, ideally before RSV season begins in late summer or early fall.
Possible side effects:	Soreness at the injection site, fatigue, headache, and muscle pain.

How to Talk to People About Vaccines

Explain the importance of vaccinations.

- Emphasize that people living with diabetes are at higher risk for serious complications from infections, and that vaccines are a way to help prevent these complications.
- Provide reassurance that vaccines are effective in preventing potentially dangerous diseases. Vaccines teach the immune system to recognize and fight off specific pathogens.
- Emphasize that vaccines are safe and thoroughly tested before being licensed and recommended for use.

Address common concerns.

- **"Will the vaccine affect my blood glucose?"**
  - Explain that vaccines may cause mild side effects like fever or soreness, which can temporarily affect blood glucose. Encourage people to monitor their blood glucose more closely after vaccination.
- **"Are vaccines safe?"**
  - Yes, vaccines are safe and specifically recommended for people living with chronic conditions like diabetes.
- **"I'm worried about the side effects."**
  - Most side effects are mild and short-lived, such as a sore arm, mild fever, or headache. These are much less dangerous than the illnesses the vaccines prevent.

Encourage regular monitoring.

- Encourage people to keep a record of their vaccinations and share it with their health care team.
- Remind them to monitor their blood glucose levels closely before and after vaccination, especially if they feel unwell.

Help with scheduling vaccinations.

- Offer to help people schedule appointments for their vaccines and follow up to ensure they receive their vaccinations on time.
- Discuss the timing of vaccines. Some vaccines need to be spaced out over several months (e.g., hepatitis B), while others are given annually (e.g., flu).

Tips for Community Health Workers

- **Build trust**
  Approach the topic with empathy and a non-judgmental attitude. Many people living with diabetes may have concerns about vaccines, so creating an open dialogue is essential.
- **Promote preventive care**
  Frame the conversation around preventive care and self-empowerment. Encourage individuals to view vaccination as a proactive step in managing their health. Highlight everyday practices that support wellness, such as frequent handwashing, avoiding face touching, covering coughs and sneezes, and staying home when feeling ill.
- **Tailor conversations to individual needs**
  Not everyone may need the same set of vaccines. For example, someone under 50 years old may not need the shingles vaccine yet, while someone over 65 years old may need both the flu and pneumococcal vaccines.
- **Address access barriers**
  Ensure that people know where to access free or low-cost vaccines and offer support with transportation or scheduling if needed.
- **Follow up**
  Remind people about upcoming vaccine appointments and offer additional information if they have questions or concerns.

Additional Resources for Community Health Workers

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**
  Vaccines and Immunizations
- **World Health Organization (WHO)**
  Vaccines and Immunizations
- **Local Health Department Websites**
  Check for vaccine availability, free clinics, and local outreach programs.

Empower the Diabetes Community

Vaccinations are an essential tool in maintaining the health of people living with diabetes. By empowering those in your community to stay up to date with their vaccines, you help reduce their risk of serious illnesses and improve their quality of life. Encourage people to speak with their primary care doctor to develop a personalized vaccination schedule.

Thank you for helping protect the health of people living with diabetes!

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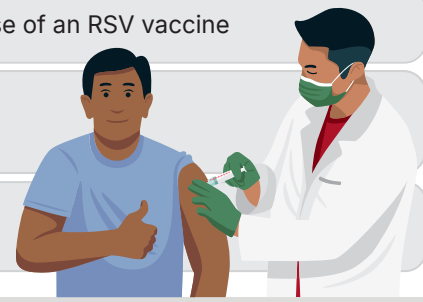
Guidelines InSIGHT
Your visual guide to the guidelines

Protect People with Diabetes with the Recommended Vaccines

VACCINE	RECOMMENDED AGES	SCHEDULE
COVID-19	Individuals ≥6 months of age based on shared clinical decision-making	Current initial vaccination and boosters
Hepatitis B	• People <60 years of age • People ≥60 years of age based on clinician's risk assessment	Schedule varies based on type of vaccine used
Influenza	All individuals ≥6 months of age who do not have a contraindication. All people with diabetes are recommended to receive the inactive or recombinant influenza vaccines. All people with diabetes are cautioned against taking the live attenuated (nasal spray) vaccine.	Annual
Pneumonia (older vaccine PPSV23)	19–64 years of age	• If received PCV13, give one dose of PPSV23 • If received PCV15, follow with PPSV23 after ≥1 year • PPSV23 is not indicated after PCV20 • Adults who received only PPSV23 may receive PCV15 or PCV20 ≥1 year after their last dose
	≥65 years of age	• One dose is recommended for those who previously received PCV13 • If PCV15 was used, follow with PPSV23 ≥1 year later • PPSV23 is not indicated after PCV20 • Adults who received only PPSV23 may receive PCV15 or PCV20 ≥1 year after their last dose
Pneumonia (newer vaccines: PCV15 or PCV 20)	Adults 19–64 years of age with an immunocompromising condition, including diabetes	One dose of PCV15 or PCV20 is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
	Adults 19–64 years of age who are immunocompetent	For those who have never received any pneumococcal vaccine, the CDC recommends one dose of PCV15 or PCV20
	≥65 years who are immunocompetent should have shared decision-making discussion with health care professionals	• One dose of PCV15 or PCV20 • PCSV23 may be given ≥8 weeks after PCV15 • PPSV23 is not indicated after PCV20
RSV	Older adults ≥60 years of age with diabetes	May receive a single dose of an RSV vaccine
Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Tdap)	• All adults • Pregnant individuals should have an extra dose with each pregnancy	Booster every 10 years
Zoster	≥50 years of age	Two doses, even if previously vaccinated



Learn more at diabetes.org | 1-800-DIABETES (800-342-2383)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Immunization Schedules. www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/imz-schedules/

This infographic is based on recommendations from the ADA's *Standards of Care in Diabetes—2026*

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Patient Education Resources

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Talking with Your Doctor or Pharmacist About Vaccines

Getting sick may affect your blood glucose (blood sugar), making it harder to manage. Vaccines may help keep you from getting sick or avoid serious illness from infections. Having a conversation with your doctor or pharmacist about vaccines—and asking any questions you have—can help you better understand which ones are right for you. Here are some tips for talking with your doctor or pharmacist.

Key Points to Discuss

Discuss Any Special Considerations

If you have other health conditions or are taking medications, you may need special attention.

Ask "Are there any vaccines I should avoid because of my current medications or other conditions?"

Ask "I do not like getting shots. Are there any alternatives?"

Discuss What to Expect After Vaccination

You may have concerns about how vaccines will affect your blood glucose levels or overall health. It is important to discuss potential side effects and how to manage them.

Ask "Are there any specific side effects I should watch out for, and will it affect my blood glucose?"

Ask "Will I have a reaction to the vaccine?"

Ask "Is there anything I can do if I do not feel well after my vaccine?"

Ask about which vaccines you should get since you have diabetes

People with diabetes are often at higher risk of serious illness from infections, so it is important to ask about vaccines that are helpful for people living with diabetes.

- Example: "I have type 2 diabetes. Which vaccines should I get to protect myself and why are they important?"

Here are the vaccines you should be aware of and questions you can ask about them:

Flu Vaccine (Influenza)

The flu vaccination changes every year to protect people from the common strains.

Ask "Is the flu vaccine recommended for me, and how often do I need to get it?"

Ask "What is the difference between the injection and nasal spray flu vaccines?"

Pneumococcal Vaccine (Pneumococcal Disease)

Pneumococcal disease can cause mild illnesses like ear and sinus infections but can lead to serious conditions. The two most dangerous are pneumonia and meningitis.

Ask "Do I need the pneumococcal vaccine, and when should I get it?"

Hepatitis B Vaccine

Ask "Should I get the Hepatitis B vaccine, and are there any special considerations for someone with diabetes?"

Shingles Vaccine (Zoster)

The risk of shingles increases after the age of 50.

Ask "Am I a candidate for the shingles vaccine, and when should I get it?"

COVID-19 Vaccine

Ask "What is the current guidance on COVID-19 vaccines and boosters for people living with diabetes?"

Tdap Vaccine (Tetanus, also called lockjaw, Diphtheria, and Pertussis)

Ask "Do I need a Tdap vaccine, and how often do I need to get it to ensure protection?"

RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) Vaccine

RSV season usually starts in late summer or early fall, so the timing of vaccination matters.

Ask "Should I get the RSV vaccine based on my age and health conditions?"

Ask "When is the best time to get vaccinated for RSV?"

Vaccines are a key part of staying healthy when living with diabetes. By talking to your doctor or pharmacist about them, you can take steps to stay protected against illness.

Share your feedback at bit.ly/ada-alert

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Prevent, Protect, and Plan to Stay Healthy with Vaccinations

Immunizations and vaccines protect everyone, especially people living with diabetes.

To stay healthy, follow the three Ps:

1 Prevent illness and complications before they happen.

Diabetes puts you at a higher risk of complications from infections. And those complications can be serious. Vaccinations are a powerful way to protect your health.

Talk to your doctor about which vaccines are right for you. This will be based on factors like your age and health history.

Common vaccines for people with diabetes include:

- Flu
- Pneumococcal
- Hepatitis B
- Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis)
- Shingles
- COVID-19
- RSV (respiratory syncytial virus)

2 Protect yourself from getting sick.

Everyday habits can also help you stay healthy and avoid infections, aim to:

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Get enough sleep. Aim for 7–9 hours each night.
- Eat healthy foods. Focus on fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, along with foods high in vitamin C, zinc, and vitamin D.
- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids.
- Be active. Aim for 150 minutes of physical activity each week (try 30 minutes of activity for five days of the week).
- Manage stress.
- Take medications as directed.

3 Plan ahead for sick days so you are ready.

Being sick can affect your blood glucose (blood sugar), making diabetes harder to manage.

BEFORE YOU GET SICK:

Work with your doctor to create a **sick day action plan** that includes:

- How often to check your blood glucose
- Whether to adjust insulin or medications
- When to check for ketones
- Which over-the-counter (OTC) medications are safe to use
- How to prevent low blood glucose (hypoglycemia)
- What to eat and how to get fluids if sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- When to call the doctor or go to the emergency room (ER), such as for fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or high blood glucose

BUILD A SICK DAY KIT:

Keep these supplies ready:

- Blood glucose testing supplies and backup batteries
- Seven-day supply of diabetes medications (rotate monthly)
  - Insulin (if prescribed) and needles/pen needles/pump supplies
- Glucose tabs/glucose gels
- Glucagon, if needed (ready-to-use glucagon is preferred)
- Doctor-approved OTC medications
- Ketone test strips
- Thermometer and backup batteries
- Drinks to stay hydrated
- Doctor's contact information and telehealth link

IF YOU GET SICK:

- Keep taking diabetes medications as prescribed unless your doctor advises otherwise
- Stay hydrated and monitor blood glucose frequently
- Call your doctor or go to the ER if symptoms worsen
- If you are at the ER or seeing another doctor, inform them about your diabetes and give them a list of your medications.

Ask your doctor about antiviral treatments.

Early treatment can help keep the illness from getting worse and help you recover faster if you get sick with the flu or COVID-19.

Share your feedback at bit.ly/ada-alert

For more information, visit **diabetes.org/Vaccinations**

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Sick Day Guide for People with Diabetes

BEFORE YOU GET SICK

Create a sick day action plan with your doctor:

- How often to check blood glucose (blood sugar)
- Whether to adjust insulin or medications
- When to check for ketones
- Which over-the-counter (OTC) medications are safe to use
- How to prevent low blood glucose (hypoglycemia)
- What to eat and how to get fluids if sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- When to call the doctor or go to the emergency room (ER), such as for fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or high blood glucose.

BUILD A SICK DAY KIT

Keep these supplies ready:

- Blood glucose testing supplies and backup batteries
- Seven-day supply of diabetes medications (rotate monthly)
  - Insulin (if prescribed) and needles/pen needles/pump supplies
- Glucose tabs/glucose gels
- Glucagon, if needed (ready-to-use glucagon is preferred)
- Doctor-approved OTC medications
- Drinks to stay hydrated
- Ketone test strips
- Thermometer and backup batteries
- Doctor's contact information and telehealth link

WHEN YOU FEEL SICK

- Keep taking diabetes medications as prescribed unless your doctor advises otherwise
- Stay hydrated and monitor blood glucose frequently
- Call your doctor or go to the ER if symptoms worsen
- If you are at the ER or seeing another doctor, inform them about your diabetes and give them a list of your medications

SICK DAY CHECKLIST

CHECK	GENERAL TARGETS/ACTION
✓ **Blood Glucose**	▪ 80–130 mg/dL fasting ▪ <180 mg/dL two hours after meals (or per doctor) ▪ Watch for lows and use the 15/15 rule of 15 grams fast-acting carbohydrates (carbs)/15 minutes to treat low blood glucose (less than 70 mg/dL)
✓ **Ketones**	Test every four to six hours if blood glucose >200 mg/dL
✓ **Fluids**	Alternate water and electrolyte drinks

After following your sick day plan, call your doctor or go to the ER if you experience:

- ▶ Vomiting or diarrhea for more than four hours
- ▶ Moderate to large ketones or fruity breath
- ▶ Fever above 101 degrees F (38.3 degrees C) lasting more than 24 hours
- ▶ Blood glucose above 300 mg/dL for two readings despite corrections
- ▶ Signs of dehydration (dizziness, dark urine)
- ▶ Uncertainty about medication doses while sick

This infographic is based on recommendations from the ADA's *Standards of Care in Diabetes—2026*

American Diabetes Association®

Guidelines InSIGHT
Your visual guide to the guidelines

Protect Yourself with Vaccines if You Have Diabetes

Which vaccines are recommended?

VACCINE	AGE
COVID-19 (and boosters)	■ 6 months old and older if you and your diabetes care team decide it is right for you
Hepatitis B	■ 59 years old and younger ■ 60 years old and older—talk with your diabetes care team
Flu (Influenza)	■ 6 months old and older—recommended annually for individuals without barriers for use ■ All people with diabetes are recommended to receive the inactive or recombinant influenza vaccines ■ Using the live attenuated (nasal spray) vaccine in people with diabetes is NOT recommended
Pneumonia *Older vaccine PPSV23*	■ 19 years old and older: One dose is recommended if PCV13 or PCV15 were used in the past—discuss timing of dose with your care team
Newer vaccines: PCV15 or PCV 20	■ 19–64 years old ■ 65 years old or older—talk with your diabetes care team about options
RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)	■ 60 years old and older
Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis)	■ 18 years old and older: A booster dose every 10 years ■ During each pregnancy: A booster dose between 27–36 weeks of pregnancy
Shingles (Zoster)	■ 50 years old and older

Learn more at diabetes.org | 1-800-DIABETES (800-342-2383)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Immunization Schedules. www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/imz-schedules/

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Shield Yourself & Loved Ones Against Serious Diseases

THE REALITY IS SERIOUS

Many Americans still develop illness that vaccines can help prevent every year, leading to hospital admissions and deaths.

WHY VACCINES MATTER

Factors, such as your age, job, lifestyle, or health conditions, such as diabetes, increase your risk for developing the illnesses vaccines help prevent. The protection from vaccines you received as a child wears off over time and can also put you at risk.

The Cost of Illness

THINK ABOUT THIS

Even if you're healthy, you can still develop illnesses. Illness can keep you from working, going to school, or caring for your family.

IF YOU HAVE DIABETES

Protecting yourself from illness is even more critical to managing your diabetes, preventing complications from illness, and to support your wellbeing.

Vaccines: Your Health Guardians

POWER OF PREVENTION

Vaccines greatly reduce your risk for illness and complications of illness by by working with your body's natural defenses. This will also help protect those around you from an illness that your body has fought off.

SAFETY FIRST

Vaccines are a safe way to protect your health, with most side effects being minor and temporary. Severe reactions to vaccines are very rare.

SPREAD LOVE, NOT DISEASES

Protect infants, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems by getting vaccinated.

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Learn more at diabetes.org | 1-800-DIABETES (800-342-2383)

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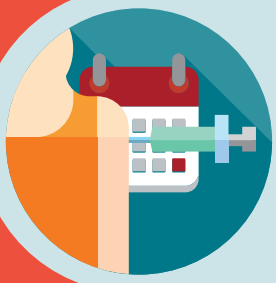
Living with Diabetes:

Fighting the Flu and Protecting You

While diabetes does not make you more likely to get the flu, it does raise your chances of getting seriously sick—making it extra risky for people living with diabetes.

Call your doctor right away if you experience flu symptoms.



Get vaccinated annually for the flu.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist about getting a prescription for an antiviral treatment if you get the flu. Antiviral treatments may lessen flu complications and work best if started one to two days when flu symptoms start.

Always check with your doctor or ask your pharmacist for advice if you're sick and not sure what to do.

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Learn more at **diabetes.org/about-diabetes/vaccinations** | 1-800-DIABETES (800-342-2383)

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professional.diabetes.org/Vaccinations