



District 2 Public Health

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Union County Health Department Announces Changes for Some Vaccines

GAINESVILLE, GA -- Beginning May 1, 2012, the Union County Health Department will be able to provide the following vaccines without a prescription from your health care provider: Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B and Herpes Zoster (Shingles). These vaccines can be filed under Medicare Part D. Call 706-745-6292 to find out what your co-pay would be if you have this coverage.

Vaccine Recommendations *(From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Advisory Council on Immunization Practices)*

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver and refers to a group of viral infections that affect the liver. The most common types of Hepatitis are Hepatitis A, B, and C. According to the CDC, viral hepatitis is the leading cause of liver cancer and approximately 4.4 million Americans are living with chronic hepatitis.

Hepatitis A vaccination is recommended for all children at age 1 year, for persons who are at increased risk for infection, for persons who are at increased risk for complications from Hepatitis A, and for anyone wishing to obtain immunity. The virus is spread by ingesting food or drink contaminated by fecal matter that contains the virus - usually a result of poor hand washing by those preparing the food or beverage. It is commonly passed among young children by sharing contaminated toys, food or drink. Hepatitis A infection can last for several weeks or even months but it does not lead to chronic infection. Certain groups of people are more at risk for Hepatitis A and should also get vaccinated, including: persons living in or traveling to areas with high hepatitis A rates (especially outside of the U.S.), persons who work in health care or child care, persons with health conditions like HIV that weaken the immune system, intravenous drug users, and men who have sex with men.

Hepatitis B is a serious illness and the CDC recommends vaccination for anyone in the following groups of people: hemodialysis patients or those who have end-stage renal disease; have chronic liver disease; have a job that involves contact with human blood such as a laboratory worker; on the staff of, or a client in, an institution for the developmentally disabled; live or travel for more than 6 months a year in countries where hepatitis B is common; live in the same house as a person with hepatitis B virus infection or have sex with a person with hepatitis B; persons that have sex with more than one partner; persons that seek care in a clinic for sexually transmitted diseases, HIV testing or treatment, or drug treatment; men who have sex with other men; persons that inject drugs; or are a prisoner in a correctional facility.

Shingles is a painful skin rash caused by the varicella zoster virus, the same virus that causes chicken pox. Nearly 1 in 3 people in the U.S. will develop shingles. Anyone who has recovered from chicken pox can get shingles - even children. However, the risk of getting shingles increases as people get older. About half of all shingles cases are in men and women 60 years of age and older. People with medical conditions like certain cancers or HIV that keep their immune systems from working properly are more susceptible to shingles. Additionally, people taking steroids or drugs given after organ transplantation are at greater risk for shingles. Typically, people will only have one episode of shingles in their lifetime, though some people may have two or more episodes.

In 2006, the Advisory Council on Immunizations Practices recommended the shingles vaccine for persons 60 years of age and older to reduce the risk of shingles and its associated pain. Even people who have had shingles can receive the vaccine to help prevent future occurrences of the disease. This is a one-time vaccine and there is no maximum age for getting the vaccine.

To learn more about immunizations, contact your local health department at 706-745-6292.

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