Keeping up to date on recommended immunizations for your patients: What to DO?

Vaccinations are recommended throughout life to prevent vaccine-preventable diseases and their sequelae. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) meets 3 times a year—in February, June, and October—to review and make recommendations for Food and Drug Administration-approved vaccines. The ACIP recommendations can be found at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/acip-list.htm.

The Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report will publish ACIP recommendations after CDC approval, which is typically 4-6 months after the ACIP meeting. The 2013 CDC vaccination schedules (see Figure 2 on p. 3) are published annually and can be found at http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/su6201a3.htm.

The March 2013 issue of AOA Health Watch, “Improve adult immunization coverage,” discussed the influenza trivalent, or TIV, now called the inactivated influenza vaccine (IIV), the live attenuated influenza vaccine, or LAIV, the pneumococcal vaccines, including both the polysaccharide (PPSV-23) and the conjugated (PCV-13), as well as the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccines. This issue of AOA Health Watch reviews the zoster; adult tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Tdap); and varicella vaccinations.

Up-to-date resources
Several excellent websites are updated regularly and provide accurate information and advice for physicians, other health care professionals (HCPs), and the general public. The HCPs must remain knowledgeable about the latest recommendations in order to promote appropriate immunizations for preventable diseases. HCP attitude is very influential in a patient’s decision to receive the needed vaccinations. If an HCP recommends a particular immunization, the patient is much more likely to receive the vaccination. 1, 2, 3

The CDC website (see Figure 3 on p. 3, www.cdc.gov) provides updated information on all immunizations and infectious disease disorders. The site is easy to navigate with the “search engine” (see arrow at the upper right corner of Figure 3 on p. 3); just type in the specific vaccine or disorder you would like to review.

The Immunization Advocacy Coalition (IAC) website (see Figure 4 on p. 4, www.immunize.org) is another HCP- and patient-friendly website.

Figure 1. Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) website.
The IAC is partially funded by the CDC, and also receives private donations. The IAC has 3 publications: Needle Tips, IAC Express, and Vaccinate Adults.

- **Needle Tips** is written for HCPs who provide immunization services to children, teens, or adults. Every issue includes the “Ask the Experts” feature, written by CDC experts. They answer challenging and timely questions about vaccines and their administration. The “Vaccine Highlights” section contains vaccine news from the ACIP and the CDC. The “Ready-to-Print Materials” section allows information to be copied for staff and patients. The CDC reviews the technical content of Needle Tips for accuracy.

- The IAC Express is e-mailed weekly and features important immunization developments, such as the latest vaccine recommendations and licensures, important journal articles, practical vaccination resources, conference announcements, videos, and meetings.

- **Vaccinate Adults** is written for HCPs who provide services for adults. Every issue includes the “Ask the Experts” feature by CDC experts and copyright-free print materials from the IAC to photocopy and give to staff and patients. The CDC reviews technical content for accuracy.

Another resource for patients is the IAC’s newly launched website, “Vaccine Information You Need.” It is one of the most comprehensive and user-friendly sources of scientifically accurate and easily navigable immunization information.

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Figure 2. Adult vaccine schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaccine Schedule</th>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Doses</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tdap, diphtheria, pertussis (DTPa)</td>
<td>Adolescents</td>
<td>1 dose</td>
<td>To be considered for all adolescents 11-18 years of age not previously immunized for tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis who are unvaccinated or underimmunized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenza (Flu)</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>1 dose</td>
<td>To be considered for all patients 6 months of age and older.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV)</td>
<td>Infants and young children</td>
<td>2-4 doses</td>
<td>To be considered for all infants 2-15 months of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)</td>
<td>Infants and young children</td>
<td>1-5 doses</td>
<td>To be considered for all infants 6-11 months of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepatitis A</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>1 dose</td>
<td>To be considered for all patients 12 months of age and older.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>2 doses</td>
<td>To be considered for all patients 12 months of age and older.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepatitis B</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>3 doses</td>
<td>To be considered for all patients 12 months of age and older.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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[Figure 3. CDC website.](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/downloads/adult/adult sched-2013.pdf)

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with the mission of improving clinician performance and patient health associated with immunizations across the age spectrum. **PROTECT** is used by some AOA societies as part the Clinical Assessment Program (CAP) for Osteopathic Continuous Certification (OCC, www.osteopathic.org/healthwatch). A parent's advocate group for immunizations, Voices for Vaccines, is a great resource for both HCPs and patients (see Figure 5 on p.4). The most important goal of Voices for Vaccines is to provide clear, accessible, science-based information about vaccines and vaccine-preventable diseases. Their leadership consists of scientists and concerned individuals who are...
committed to supporting continued efforts to eradicate vaccine-preventable diseases. Voices for Vaccines does not accept funding from governments or vaccine companies.

Several applications (or “apps”) are available for smartphones, tablets, laptops, and computers for immunization information. SHOTS, by the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine, is an up-to-date digital immunization reference. This free download is beneficial for clinicians, teachers, and HCPs or for anyone who needs quick answers to tough vaccination questions.13 The American College of Physicians’ Immunization Advisor app makes it easy to find the right vaccines for your patients by age or underlying medical circumstance.

Final notes
Because of the importance of vaccines for vaccine-preventable diseases, the HCP must stay abreast of the ACIP recommendations in order to provide patients with the most up-to-date immunization information.

The articles and websites listed in the May 2013 issue of AOA Health Watch discuss varicella vaccinations, evaluating herpes zoster risk, and adult tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap).

The IIA, LAIV, the pneumococcal vaccines and the conjugated, and the MMR vaccinations are covered in the March 2013 issue. Both issues in this two-part series are designed to help physicians understand the most recent vaccination recommendations and to help improve adult immunization coverage.

References

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