Lifewire: Some things you need to know about immunizations

by Ven_Griva

Timing is everything, even for vaccinations.

Take August for example. That's National Immunization Awareness Month, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is when the CDC concentrates on educating people about their need for vaccinations from infancy to old age.

The reduction and elimination of disease using vaccination is one the greatest health accomplishments of the 20th century, says the CDC. Yet today, tens of thousands of people in the United States die from vaccine-preventable diseases.

The CDC believes August is the best time to remind Americans to make sure they have had all their shots. Parents are enrolling their children in school, students are going off to college, and health care workers are getting ready for flu season.

By staying up-to-date on your shots, you can protect your friends, your family and yourself from life-threatening infections such as polio, measles, diphtheria, rubella, pertussis and more.

Some vaccines wear out over time, says the CDC, and public health officals frequently update vaccination schedules to include newly tested and approved vaccines such as the human papillomavirus vaccine for adolescent girls and the pneumonia vaccine of people over 65.

If you have questions about whether your shots are up-to-date, the CDC Web site (www.cdc.gov/vaccines/) maintains updated information and vaccination schedules for all ages. Adults, infants and toddlers, pre-teens and adolescents, college students and young adults, parents, and pregnant women are all covered.

If you are 11 years old or more, answer the questions on the Adolescents and Adult Quiz and you will recive a report detailing which vaccines you might need.

DOES A BODY GOOD

Most of us fail to get the calcium and vitamin D we need. What we might not know is how much healthier

we might be if only were were to follow FDA dietary guidelines by consuming three servings of lowfat or fat-free milk per day.

Sure, our bones would be stronger.

But that's not all.

A lack of something as simple as milk might be partly to blame for the ballooning epidemic of type 2 diabetes in the United States that affects up to 75 million Americans, reports the researchers from Tufts University in Boston. Death rates from diabetes have increased nearly 45 percent over the past 20 years, adding importance to the efforts to combat the disease.

Drinking more milk, the primary source for calcium and vitamin D in the American diet, could help decrease the risk of type 2 diabetes by nearly 15 percent, according to a review published in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism.

In analyzing previously published studies, researchers found chronically low levels of vitamin D were linked to as much as a 46 percent greater risk of contracting type 2 diabetes. But, the research found, taking vitamin D supplements alone offers little help for healthy adults.

Instead, the researchers suggest a combination of vitamin D and calcium, like that found in milk, offers the greatest potential to help prevent diabetes, especially among those at highest risk for the disease.

Tufts researchers infer that calcium and vitamin D could affect the body's ability to produce or use insulin, the hormone the body makes to process sugar that is impaired in people with diabetes and pre-diabetes.

MEAT MARKET

Eating cured meats like bacon or sausage on a regular basis could increase your risk of contracting chronic lung disease, says a study published by Columbia Medical School.

The study results appeared in April in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, published by the American Thoracic Society.

It's the nitrates used to colorize and preserve ham and salami that could be the cause of the trouble, theorizes Columbia researcher Dr. Rui Jiang. The nitrates are linked to damage in lungs that resembles emphysema.

Jiang and his colleagues followed more than 7,000 people over age 45 from 1988 to 1994. They found that study participants who ate cured meats more than 14 days per month were 78 percent more likely to develop chronic obstructive pulmonary disease than those who seldom ate cured meat.

This was true even when researchers considered such factors as smoking.

Cured meats are high in nitrates, and those chemicals can form compounds that damage the elastin and collagen in lung tissue, the study said.

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