

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness segment where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. This is Katie Johnson and my guest today is Terri Anderson. She's the Infection Prevention coordinator at Lake Regional Health care and she's here to talk to us today about immunizations. Good morning Terri.

Terri Anderson: Good morning Katie.

Katie Johnson: Well August is National immunizations month, if our listeners didn't know and a time we thought we could remind people that vaccines really aren't just for kids. There are about 40 to 50 thousand adults in the United States that die from vaccine preventable infectious diseases or their complications every year. And that calls attention to the need for education about immunizations not only for kids but for adults as well. So to help make sure that you're up to date on your immunizations we're going to ask Terri some questions. Like I mentioned when we think of them we usually think of kids. Why is it important for adults to get vaccinated too?

Terri Anderson: You know we all got vaccines as kids and we all get our kids vaccines but as we age those vaccines can wind down. A good example of that is the pertussis vaccine. We've seen now that the CDC is saying everybody should have a booster of that because we're finding that it maybe doesn't last as long as it used to. Plus as adults age their immune system isn't as strong and so it's harder for them to fight off these viruses. So it's important that they get vaccines.

Katie Johnson: It was surprising to me to hear that number 40 to 50 thousand U.S. adults dying from vaccine preventable diseases and complications. So what are the most important vaccinations for adults to get - What are causing those deaths?

Terri Anderson: Influenza vaccinations are big. CDC recommends everybody over the age of six months gets those. And the pneumococcal vaccinations for older adults are also very important. There's two different kinds. The pneumovax covers 23 different strains and the prevnar covers 13 different strains.

Katie Johnson: And pneumococcal in plain English

Terri Anderson: Pneumonia. Doesn't mean that you can't get pneumonia. Just like when you get influenza vaccine that doesn't mean you won't get the flu. There's many different strains of both of those viruses out there and you could still get ill with either/or having been vaccinated.

Katie Johnson: Right. But it just raises that level of protection and decreases risk. How about specifically for senior citizens. Are there regular vaccines that older adults should get.

Terri Anderson: There's not regular vaccines other than to stay on top of those pneumonia and influenza with influenza there is a high dose influenza vaccine that you can get

which my mom didn't know that existed so I'm guessing other people don't know what's out there too.

Katie Johnson: You mentioned flu shots - we're coming up on that time of the year. Is there an ideal time of the year or month to get your flu shot.

Terri Anderson: October has kind of been termed influenza vaccination month. That's typically when people start giving their flu shots, reason being is influenza season goes anywhere between October and May and so. Not getting it earlier than that will help to ensure that they're protected last through the season

Katie Johnson: And getting it early doesn't mean you're going to have a risk of it not lasting long enough throughout the season?

Terri Anderson: Right. Right. Again there's those different strains you can get sick with something else hopefully if you do get sick your IT WAS won't be as severe.

Katie Johnson: Let's talk a little bit about babies. How old do they need to be before they start getting vaccinated?

Terri Anderson: Some vaccinations happen shortly after birth. Others they wait till they're 2 months old and see them in the clinic.

Katie Johnson: Flu shots in particular for babies?

Terri Anderson: Six months.

Katie Johnson: Do we have any information yet about the flu vaccine - what we think the most prevalent strains might be or what we think the flu season might look like?

Terri Anderson: The vaccine this year is going to be geared towards two different influenza strains and influenza strain. That's three strains that they've seen circulating and they think are going to be most prevalent referring to CDC. Doesn't mean that there's not going to be others out there. So and I hear that. Often I got the flu shot and I got sick. But illnesses aren't as severe.

Katie Johnson: One thing we've heard more about lately is the HPV vaccination for both boys and girls. Can you tell us why this vaccine is important and what ages benefit the most from the HPV vaccination?

Terri Anderson: Yep the human papillomavirus. We have heard is the virus that is responsible for cervical cancer but it can also be responsible for other types of genital cancers and it's spread by sexual transmission. So the goal is to get those kids before they become sexually active so that we can give them the full protection against it.

Katie Johnson: So what is the recommended age or the ideal age?

Terri Anderson: 11 or 12 when they start. If they start at age 11 or 12 they need two doses. If they start after age 15 then it goes up to three.

Katie Johnson: And a little bit about the anti-vaccine thoughts or movements out there. Are there ways to protect your child even if your child is vaccinated from certain diseases? Knowing that there are others out there who aren't vaccinated?

Terri Anderson: Vaccination of course is the best way to protect your child if you know that there's something going around daycare or school and you want to try and protect your child a little bit more and maybe limit their activities with friends or caregivers. But part of the problem is viruses many of them can be transmitted before we even show symptoms. And so we may have them being around someone sick and we don't even know it.

Katie Johnson: So how do we know that vaccines are safe. You know there's always those who are questioning whether they really are safe or whether they are really the best method. What's your answer to that.

Terri Anderson: All vaccines have side effects and they're not unheard of. Just because you have a side effect doesn't mean that you can't get a vaccine or that it's unsafe so just make sure that you do your research. CDC has some great resources on there. With links to various organizations not just theirs.

Katie Johnson: So that's maybe your answer to my next question What's the best resource if you're looking for information about what vaccinations do my kids need or when or as an adult or as a senior citizen - a reliable source for good information or maybe there's more than one.

Terri Anderson: Yes CDC is great. You could also go to the Minnesota Department of Health website if you have access to the Internet and they will be more specific on what the needs are for the state.

Katie Johnson: How about conversations with your primary care provider. I'm assuming that that's something that should be brought up at your regular appointment any way but perhaps a good question to ask?

Terri Anderson: Great question to ask. You know. I know from just work I do hear that the pneumococcal vaccinations the pneumonia vaccinations are not always discussed as are the high dose influenza vaccinations. So bring that up to your providers.

Katie Johnson: Good idea to be proactive and bring up that question on your own and take control of your health. Any other tips or advice you have for our listeners on immunizations this morning.

Terri Anderson: No.

Katie Johnson: Other than get your flu shot get your flu shot!

Terri Anderson: Yes flu season's here.

Katie Johnson: Right so and we'll have a guest in the next couple of weeks talking about our flu shot clinics coming up here to make those times and places convenient and available to you for those. But in the meantime think more about any vaccinations you might be due for or depending on the age of you or those in your family. August is a great time to think about immunizations and about keeping you and your family healthy. Terri Anderson our infection prevention coordinator at Lake Region Healthcare and my guest today on apple a day for immunization month. Thank you Terri.

Terri Anderson: Thank you Katie.

Katie Johnson: Terri and Katie both remind you there is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.