

Vaccinations at Different Life Stages from 12 Years Onwards

Vaccines aren't just for babies and young children—teenagers, adults, and older people also need vaccines to stay healthy. In South Africa, getting vaccinated at different stages of life protects against new risks and ensures your body stays strong against certain diseases. Let's explore the vaccines you might need from age 12 onwards, through important milestones like adolescence, adulthood, and even old age.

Vaccinations at 12-18 Years (Adolescence)

1. Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine

The **HPV vaccine** is offered to girls between 9 and 12 years old in South Africa to protect against **cervical cancer**, which is one of the most common cancers affecting women in the country¹. The vaccine protects against certain types of HPV, which can lead to cervical cancer later in life. This vaccine is provided in schools through the government's vaccination programme.

- Learn more about HPV vaccines in South Africa¹.

2. Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis (Tdap) Booster

By the time children reach adolescence, the protection from their childhood vaccines begins to wear off. A **Tdap booster shot** is given around the age of 12 to 13 to refresh immunity against **tetanus**, **diphtheria**, and **whooping cough** (pertussis)^{**2}.

3. Meningococcal Vaccine

Meningitis is an infection that can affect the brain and spinal cord. Teenagers and young adults are at higher risk of contracting **meningococcal disease** in close-contact settings, like schools or dorms. The **meningococcal vaccine** helps protect against this serious illness³.

Vaccinations in Your 20s and 30s (Young Adulthood)

4. Hepatitis B Vaccine

Hepatitis B is a virus that affects the liver and can be passed through bodily fluids. Many South Africans are vaccinated against hepatitis B during childhood, but if you didn't receive this vaccine, it's important to get it as an adult to protect against liver disease⁴.

- Read more about Hepatitis B in South Africa⁴.

5. Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) Booster

The **MMR vaccine** protects against **measles**, **mumps**, and **rubella**. Even though you may have had this vaccine as a child, a booster shot is recommended if you weren't fully vaccinated or missed a dose. South Africa has seen **measles outbreaks** in recent years, so staying up to date is crucial⁵.

Vaccinations in Your 40s and 50s (Middle Age)

6. **Tetanus Booster (Every 10 Years)**

Even as an adult, you need a **tetanus booster** every 10 years to stay protected. Tetanus can occur from contaminated wounds or injuries, and the vaccine is the best way to prevent it. If you suffer a serious injury and haven't had a tetanus shot recently, your doctor may give you one immediately⁶.

7. **Influenza (Flu) Vaccine**

Every year, flu viruses change, which means your body needs a **flu vaccine** annually. This is especially important for adults, as flu can lead to complications like pneumonia, especially for people with underlying health conditions or weaker immune systems⁷.

- Learn more about the annual flu vaccine⁷.

Vaccinations in Your 60s and Older (Senior Years)

8. **Shingles Vaccine**

As you age, you become more susceptible to **shingles**, a painful rash caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. The **shingles vaccine** is recommended for adults over 60, as it reduces the risk of developing this painful condition and its complications⁸.

9. **Pneumococcal Vaccine**

The **pneumococcal vaccine** protects against **pneumonia**, which can be particularly dangerous for older adults. It helps guard against infections caused by the **pneumococcal bacteria**, which can lead to pneumonia, meningitis, or blood infections⁹.

- More about pneumococcal vaccines for adults⁹.

10. **COVID-19 Vaccine and Boosters**

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of vaccines for all age groups, but it's especially crucial for older adults and people with chronic conditions to stay protected. The **COVID-19 vaccine** is widely available in South Africa, and booster shots are recommended to maintain immunity as the virus evolves¹⁰.

- COVID-19 vaccination updates in South Africa¹⁰.

Why Are Vaccines Important at All Ages?

Vaccinations aren't just for children—they're a lifelong commitment to staying healthy. As you get older, your immune system weakens, making it easier for diseases to take hold. Vaccines boost your immune system and protect against preventable diseases that can become serious, especially later in life.

Herd immunity also plays a role, meaning when more people are vaccinated, it protects those who can't get vaccinated, like infants or people with certain health conditions. By keeping up with your vaccinations, you're not just protecting yourself—you're protecting your community too¹¹.

- Learn more about herd immunity¹¹.

Where Can I Get Vaccinated?

Vaccines are available at public health clinics, hospitals, and private healthcare providers throughout South Africa. The **Department of Health** ensures that most essential vaccines are available for free through public healthcare, while private providers offer vaccines at a cost. It's important to consult with your healthcare provider to make sure you're up to date on your vaccinations for your age and health status.

You can also find more information about the vaccines you need at different life stages by visiting the **Department of Health's website**¹².

References

1. **HPV Vaccination Programme in Schools** South African Department of Health - HPV Vaccination
2. **Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis (Tdap) Booster** [CDC - Tdap Vaccine](#)
3. **Meningococcal Vaccine for Adolescents** NICD - Meningococcal Disease
4. **Hepatitis B Vaccine Information** NICD - Hepatitis B
5. **Measles Outbreak and Vaccination** NICD - Measles
6. **Tetanus Vaccination Booster (Every 10 Years)** [CDC - Tetanus Vaccination](#)
7. **Influenza (Flu) Vaccination Information** NICD - Influenza (Flu)
8. **Shingles Vaccine for Older Adults** [CDC - Shingles Vaccination](#)
9. **Pneumococcal Vaccines** NICD - Pneumonia
10. **COVID-19 Vaccine and Boosters** SA Department of Health - COVID-19 Vaccine Updates
11. **Herd Immunity and Vaccines** NICD - Vaccine-Preventable Diseases
12. **South African Vaccination Information** [Department of Health - Immunisation Schedule](#)

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