MIDLIFE AND OLDER ADULTS’ VIEWS ON VACCINATIONS

September 2019
# Table of Contents

- Executive Summary  
  - Page 3
- Detailed Results  
  - Page 6
- Methodology  
  - Page 20
- Contact  
  - Page 25
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Executive Summary

- Analysis done by the CDC has shown that acute respiratory infections — including those related to influenza (flu) and pneumonia — are the eighth leading cause of death in the U.S., disproportionately affecting adults ages 65 and older. On average, according to estimates included in the CDC’s Healthy People 2020 guidelines, complications from the flu lead to more than 200,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 deaths each year.

- While getting a yearly flu shot is common overall, there are striking age differences, with respondents in the oldest two age groups—ages 60-69 and 70 and older—more likely than their younger counterparts to report having already gotten a flu shot or having plans to do so. They are also more likely to report getting a flu shot every year or almost every year. Among respondents who don’t get a flu shot, men are more likely to say they don’t think they need the shot or say that they never get the flu. Further, respondents 50 and older who don’t get the flu shot are more likely than those age 45-49 to report not liking taking medications.

- There is a low level of knowledge about the CDC’s recommended age and frequency of getting a pneumonia shot, with three in ten respondents saying they do not know what the recommended age is for a healthy adult to receive a pneumonia shot, and four in ten saying the same thing about the frequency with which a healthy adult should receive one. Perhaps as a result of this knowledge gap, few younger adults say they plan to get a pneumonia shot in the future.
Executive Summary

• The CDC recommends routine pneumonia shots for all adults ages 65 and older, yet only about six in ten respondents in that age group report already having gotten a pneumonia shot (or planning to get one). Notably, women are more likely than men to report both that they have already received a pneumonia shot and, if not gotten one yet, plan to do so. We’re left wondering if—based on their behavior—a large percentage of respondents inaccurately believe that pneumonia shots are only for women.

• The large majority of midlife and older adults say they consider a doctor or other healthcare professional as their most trusted source of information about immunizations such as flu and pneumonia shots. Moreover, the doctor’s office is the number one stop for flu or pneumonia shots, cited by about half of the respondents, with pharmacies noted by about a quarter of them.

• Washing hands and drinking more water in order to keep hydrated are the top two ways in which midlife and older adults protect themselves from germs. Notably, women are more likely than men to report washing their hands more often, taking vitamins and supplements, and using hand sanitizers as protective measures.

  o In terms of age differences, younger respondents are most likely to use hand sanitizers, and are also more likely than their slightly older counterparts (ages 50-59) to avoid crowds as a way to protect themselves against germs. Yet, respondents ages 45-49 are more likely than their older counterparts to report always or sometimes going to work or school when sick.
DETAILED RESULTS
Washing Hands and Drinking Water Top List

Eight in ten respondents say they wash their hands more often as a way to protect themselves from germs. Another two-thirds say they drink water in order to keep hydrated. Notably, women are more likely than men to report washing their hands more often, taking vitamins and supplements, and using hand sanitizers as protective measures.

1. I am going to read you a list of things some people do to protect themselves from germs that may cause them to get sick. For each one, please note whether you do this to protect yourself from germs. [n=1,836]
Younger Respondents Most Likely to Use Hand Sanitizers

They are also more likely than their slightly older counterparts (ages 50-59) to avoid crowds as a way to protect themselves against germs. Exercising, keeping hydrated, and taking vitamins and supplements as a way of staving off germs are more likely among the older respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Keep hydrated</th>
<th>Take vitamins</th>
<th>Use hand sanitizers</th>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Avoid crowds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45-49 (n=251)</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59 (n=589)</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69 (n=517)</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+ (n=480)</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. I am going to read you a list of things some people do to protect themselves from germs that may cause them to get sick. For each one, please note whether you do this to protect yourself from germs. [n=1,836]
Half Often Go To Work When Sick; Half Rarely Do

Notably, about half of respondents report *always* or *sometimes* going to work or school when sick, while another half say they *rarely* or *never* do so. Respondents ages 45-49 are more likely than their older counterparts to report *always* or *sometimes* going to work or school when sick.

2. How often do you go to work and/or school when you are sick? Would you say...? [n=1,836]
Yearly Flu Shot
Common Among
Midlife Adults

While nearly six in ten respondents say they have already gotten a flu shot and another one in ten plan to, another third say that haven’t gotten one…and don’t plan to. When asked what they typically do, the responses are essentially the same, suggesting that the likelihood of receiving a flu shot—and individuals’ plans to get them—do not vary year to year.

3. Have you, or do you plan to get a flu shot this year?
4. What do you typically do for the flu vaccine? [n=1,836]
Striking Age Differences in Receipt of Flu Shots

Respondents in the oldest two age groups—ages 60-69 and 70 and older—are more likely than their younger counterparts to report having already gotten a flu shot or having plans to do so. In contrast, those respondents in the two youngest age groups—ages 45-49 and 50-59 are more likely to say they have not gotten a flu shot and have no plans to get one.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that adults 60-69 and 70+ are also more likely to report getting a flu shot every year or almost every year, while their younger counterparts are more likely to say that they rarely or never get one.

3. Have you, or do you plan to get a flu shot this year?
4. What do you typically do for the flu vaccine? [n=1,836]
Not Wanting a Shot and Concerns About Side Effects and Safety Top Reasons for Forgoing Yearly Flu Shot

It is notable that men are more likely than women to say they don’t think they need a flu shot and that they never get the flu. Another striking difference is that adults ages 50-59 and those age 70 or older are more likely than those 45-49 to mention not liking to take medications as a reason for not getting a flu shot.

5. Why do you rarely or never get a flu shot? (n=565)

- I don’t want to get a flu shot: 44%
- I am concerned about possible side effects: 38%
- I don’t believe in them/don’t think they are safe: 38%
- I don’t think I need one: 31%
- I never get the flu: 28%
- I don’t like to take medications: 18%
- My doctor doesn’t recommend one: 4%
- It costs too much: 3%
- I don’t have the time: 3%
Half Have, or Plan to, Receive a Shot for Pneumonia

Yet, while roughly four in ten midlife and older adults report already having gotten a pneumonia shot, a similar proportion note that they have not gotten such a shot and do not plan to do so. Women are more likely than men to report both that they have already received a pneumonia shot and that, if they have not gotten one yet, they plan to do so. Men are more likely than women to have no plans to do so.

### Percentage of respondents who have received or plan to receive a pneumonia shot

- **Yes, I have gotten a shot for pneumonia**: 41%
- **Not yet, but I plan to**: 13%
- **No, and I do not plan to**: 37%
- **Don’t know**: 9%

6. Have you ever had a shot for pneumonia? [n=1,836]
Low Knowledge About Pneumonia Shots

Three in ten adults ages 45 and older say they do not know what the recommended age is for a healthy adult to receive a pneumonia shot, while four in ten say the same thing about the frequency with which a healthy adult should receive one. About one-quarter know the right age (65-plus) and one-fifth know the right frequency (one in a lifetime).

7. What do you think is the recommended age for a healthy adult to get a pneumonia shot? Would you say…? [n=1,836]
6. How often do you think a healthy adult should get a pneumonia shot? Would you say…? [n=1,836]
Clear Age Differences in Receipt—and Knowledge of—Pneumonia Shots

As with flu shots, getting a pneumonia shot, or planning to get one, is an activity more likely undertaken by respondents in the two oldest age groups. In this case, however, it may be because the CDC-recommended age for receiving a pneumonia shot is 65 years of age. It is logical, then, that younger respondents would not have received one yet. But it is illogical that they are more likely to say they don’t plan to get a shot for pneumonia.

Percentage receiving or planning to receive a pneumonia shot

- Yes, I have gotten a shot, or plan to
- No, and I do not plan to
- Don't know

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Yes, I have gotten a shot, or plan to</th>
<th>No, and I do not plan to</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Have you ever had a shot for pneumonia? [n=1,836] 7. What do you think is the recommended age for a healthy adult to get a pneumonia shot? Would you say…? [n=1,836] 8. How often do you think a healthy adult should get a pneumonia shot? Would you say…? [n=1,836]
One-quarter say they go to their local pharmacy for the shot. Women, who are more likely to have gotten a pneumonia shot (or plan to get one), are also more likely than men to report going to their doctor’s office to get one. Respondents who are age 50 or older are more likely than those ages 45-49 to report going to their doctor’s office for shots.

Where do respondents generally go to get a flu or pneumonia shot?

- To my doctor’s office: 48%
- To the local pharmacy: 25%
- At an employer- or community-sponsored health fair: 9%
- To a local clinic/hospital/health center: 8%
- To the local grocery store: 4%
- To the Veterans Administration: 2%
- To the local health department: 1%
- Other community center: 1%

9. Where do you generally go to get a flu shot (or a pneumonia shot)? (Asked of total who have gotten or plan to get a flu shot or have ever gotten a shot for pneumonia n=1,325)
Twice As Many Have Gotten Tdap Vaccines as Have Received a Shingles Vaccine

Additionally, nearly twice as many respondents say they have not gotten—and do not plan to get—a shingles vaccine compared to those who say the same thing about the Tdap vaccine. As with the pneumonia shot, women are more likely than men to say they plan to, or have already gotten, a Tdap vaccine. They are also more likely to say they plan to get a vaccination for shingles and to say they know the recommended age for receiving one (although they were not asked for the age).

11. As an adult, have you ever gotten a Td or Tdap vaccination [for protection against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (which is also known as whooping cough)]? (n=1,836)
12. And, how about a vaccination for Shingles? Have you ever gotten a vaccination for Shingles? (n=1,836)
13. Do you know the recommended age for adults to get a vaccination for Shingles? (n=1,836)
Adults 70-Plus Most Likely to Have Gotten Tdap and Shingles Vaccines

When asked if they have gotten, or plan to get, a shingles vaccine, younger respondents (ages 45-49) are more likely to say they have not gotten one—and do not plan to. This, of course, may be because they are not yet 50 years of age, the age at which the CDC now recommends that healthy adults receive the shingles vaccine.

11. As an adult, have you ever gotten a Tdap vaccine? (n=1,836)
12. And, have you ever gotten a vaccination for Shingles? (n=1,836)
13. Do you know the recommended age for adults to get a vaccination for Shingles? (n=1,836)
Doctors Are the Most Trusted Source of Information About Vaccinations

The large majority of midlife and older adults say they consider a doctor or other healthcare professional as their most trusted source of information about immunizations such as flu and pneumonia shots.

Most trusted source of information about immunizations

- Doctor or other healthcare professional: 70%
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): 11%
- I don't trust any sources on this topic: 7%
- Pharmacist/local pharmacy: 4%
- Websites (such as WebMD or Mayo Clinic): 2%

10. Who would you say is your most trusted source of information about immunizations, such as the flu or pneumonia shot? (n=1,836)
Background

• To gather information about U.S. adults’ attitudes and behaviors related to vaccinations, in December 2018, AARP Research contracted with IPSOS Public Affairs, LLC to field a survey among adults ages 45 and older. Data collection occurred online between December 11 and 21, 2018 through IPSOS’s KnowledgePanel®, with sample targeting panelists age 45 or older. At the end of data collection, 1,836 surveys were completed.

• This survey is a rough replication of one fielded by AARP in 2011 and another fielded in 2013, with the emphasis this year on adults ages 45 and older. In this survey, as in previous versions, respondents were asked if they received a flu shot or a pneumonia shot, where they go for information about these vaccinations, and where they generally go to get the shots. Respondents were also asked about what preventive measures, if any, they take to guard against germs. In addition to being asked about flu and pneumonia shots, respondents in this fielding were also asked about the Tdap [for protection against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (which is also known as whooping cough)] and shingles vaccines.

• The sampling error is +/- three percentage points at the 95% confidence level. This means that in 95 out of 100 samples of this size, the results would fall in a range of no more than three percentage points of what would have been obtained if every person age 45 or older had been surveyed.
Methodology

• **Objective**: To gather information about U.S. adults’ views on immunizations.

• **Methodology**: Online, nationally representative survey via IPSOS’s KnowledgePanel®, with sample targeting panelists age 45 or older.

• **Sample**: IPSOS KnowledgePanel®, N=1,836

• **Oversamples**: Additional interviews were conducted to achieve the following:
  – 221 Hispanic/Latinos age 45-plus (conducted in both English and Spanish)
  – 195 African Americans age 45-plus

• **Fielding Dates**: December 11-21, 2018

• **Weighting**: Data are weighted according to the March 2018 Current Population Survey (CPS) by gender, age, region, metropolitan status, race/ethnicity, household income, education, language proficiency, and Hispanic origin.

• **Questionnaire length**: 4 minutes (median). The full questionnaire is available upon request.

• **Confidence Interval**: Total sample: ± 2.5 percentage points. The margin of error among subgroups (e.g., age cohorts, race/ethnicity oversamples) is higher.

• **Note**: Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.
About AARP

AARP is the nation’s largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the nation’s largest circulation publications, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.

Acknowledgements

IPSOS Public Affairs, LLC, conducted this survey for AARP using its nationally representative online panel, KnowledgePanel®. The author would like to thank the IPSOS team of Dave Parcell, Emily Sprague, and Abby Cohen for their assistance in fielding the survey. This report was prepared by Teresa A. Keenan, Ph.D., in AARP Research. For more information about the survey, contact Teresa Keenan at tkeenan@aarp.org.