



Immunizations and CKD

Immunizations are not just for children! All patients with chronic kidney disease should consider routine vaccinations an essential part of their care plan. These preventative measures, in addition to routine care from a kidney specialist, are essential to avoiding infections and illnesses that could cause substantial harm.

If you have chronic kidney disease or know someone who does, the following vaccines should always be considered:

- Seasonal influenza vaccine (administered yearly). Infection from the flu virus could lead to serious infections in patients with chronic kidney disease. The flu vaccine remains that single most effective preventative strategy against seasonal influenza.
- Pneumococcal vaccine, also known as the “pneumonia” vaccine (administered every 5 years). While this vaccine will not necessary prevent a pneumonia, it can prevent a serious systemic infection from a bad pneumonia, which could cause harm to the kidneys and hasten the need for dialysis treatments. Pneumococcal vaccine is very effective at limiting the harm of pneumonias acquired in the community.
- Hepatitis B vaccine (administered once as a series of three injections over several months). Hepatitis B is a serious viral infection of the liver, which can lead to liver failure and death. Patients with chronic kidney disease are at risk for blood transfusions due to chronic anemia and although its rare, hepatitis B infection can be transmitted by tainted blood products to individuals who lack immunity. In addition, if dialysis treatments are eventually necessary, immunity against hepatitis B is paramount to maintaining safety in dialysis units.

All three of the vaccines noted above are available through most primary care physicians and kidney specialists. Don't get left behind, get vaccinated!