Vaccination lowers the risk of catching some diseases caused by germs. Vaccination means giving a person a shot to make them at least partly immune to a certain germ. People with diabetes are more prone to infection. So it’s vital to get all the shots you need.

Flu Shots
Flu can make people with diabetes very sick. The flu shot prevents many cases of flu and is safe. (You cannot get flu from a flu vaccine.) During flu outbreaks, people with diabetes who have not had a flu shot go into the hospital five times as often as those who’ve had the shot.

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) says that people with diabetes should get a flu shot every fall. The only ones who should not are:
- Babies less than 6 months old
- People allergic to chicken eggs
- People allergic to a flu shot ingredient

Flu season below the equator starts in our spring. If you travel there in spring or summer, talk to your doctor about getting a flu shot first.

You may have heard of FluMist. This flu vaccine is inhaled. People with diabetes should not use FluMist. It is just for healthy young people.

It is also a good idea for the people you live with to get flu shots. You are less likely to catch the flu if the people you spend time with don’t have it.

The flu shot will not protect you against bird flu. As of April 2006, no one in the United States had had bird flu. Most people who have caught bird flu have been in contact with chickens. Bird flu has killed 150 million birds, but only about 100 people. Right now, bird flu is not a threat to people. But in the future, it likely will be. Researchers are working on vaccines for bird flu.

Pneumonia Shots
Viruses, bacteria, and fungi can all cause pneumonia. Pneumonia means that the air sacs and tubes of the lung fill up. People with pneumonia can get very sick and need to go into the hospital. Some even die.

A pneumonia shot helps prevent pneumonia caused by some kinds of bacteria.

The ADA says that adults with diabetes should get a pneumonia shot at least once. People who are more than 64 years old and had their first shot at least 5 years ago should get a booster shot. Younger people should get a second shot if they have kidney disease or have had a transplant.

Other Shots
All adults should get certain other vaccinations:
- A tetanus-diphtheria booster shot every 10 years. If you are injured, you may need a booster earlier. Ask to your health care provider.
- A chickenpox vaccine if you have not had chickenpox

In addition, if you travel to a foreign country, you may need shots for:
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Polio
- Meningitis
- Measles, mumps, and rubella

Some of these shots need to be given over several months, so see your provider well before your trip.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests that you get some shots before you go to certain places. Check their website at http://www.cdc.gov/travel/destinat.htm or call them toll-free at 1-877-394-8747.

Some countries will not let you in unless you get certain shots first. You can find a list at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1229.html.

Keeping up to date with your vaccinations is an easy but important thing you can do to stay well and help keep your diabetes under control.