

# Infection Prevention and You



## Five important reasons to vaccinate your child

You want to do what is best for your children. You know about the importance of car seats, baby gates and other ways to keep them safe. But, did you know that one of the best ways to protect your children is to make sure they have all of their vaccinations?

- 1. Immunizations can save your child's life.** Because of advances in medical science, your child can be protected against more diseases than ever before. Some diseases that once injured or killed thousands of children, have been eliminated completely and others are close to extinction— primarily due to safe and effective vaccines. One example of the great impact that vaccines can have is the elimination of polio in the U.S. Polio was once America's most-feared disease, causing death and paralysis across the country, but today, thanks to vaccination, there are no reports of polio in the U.S.
- 2. Vaccination is very safe and effective.** Vaccines are only given to children after a long and careful review by scientists, doctors, and healthcare professionals. Vaccines will involve some discomfort and may cause pain, redness, or tenderness at the site of injection but this is minimal compared to the pain, discomfort, and trauma of the diseases these vaccines prevent. Serious side effects following vaccination, such as severe allergic reaction, are very rare. The disease-prevention benefits of getting vaccines are much greater than the possible side effects for almost all children.
- 3. Immunization protects others you care about.** Children in the U.S. still get still get vaccine-preventable diseases. In fact, we have seen resurgences of measles and whooping cough (pertussis) over the past few years. In 2012 the U.S. had more than 48,000 cases of whooping cough reported for all ages and 9 deaths in children younger than 3 months. Unfortunately, some babies are too young to be completely vaccinated and some people may not be able to receive certain vaccinations due to severe allergies, weakened immune systems from conditions like leukemia, or other reasons. To help keep them safe, it is important that you and your children who are able to get vaccinated are fully immunized. This not only protects your family, but also helps prevent the spread of these diseases to your friends and loved ones.
- 4. Immunizations can save your family time and money.** A child with a vaccine-preventable disease can be denied attendance at schools or daycare facilities. Some vaccine-preventable diseases can result in prolonged disabilities and can take a financial toll because of lost time at work, medical bills or long-term disability care. In contrast, getting vaccinated against these diseases is a good investment and usually covered by insurance. The Vaccines for Children program is a federally funded program that provides free vaccinations to children in need.
- 5. Immunization protects future generations.** Vaccines have reduced and, in some cases, eliminated many diseases that killed or severely disabled people just a few generations ago. For example, smallpox vaccination eradicated that disease worldwide. Your children don't have to get smallpox shots anymore because the disease no longer exists. By vaccinating children against rubella (German measles), the risk that pregnant women will pass this virus on to their fetus or newborn has been dramatically decreased, and birth defects associated with that virus no longer are seen in the United States.

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## Vaccine-preventable diseases

There are ten routine childhood vaccines that protect children from these 14 diseases:

- DTaP: Protects against Diphtheria, Tetanus & Pertussis
- MMR: Protects against Measles, Mumps & Rubella
- HepA: Protects against Hepatitis A
- HepB: Protects against Hepatitis B
- Hib: Protects against Haemophilus influenzae type b
- Flu: Protects against Influenza
- PCV13: Protects against Pneumococcal disease
- Polio: Protects against Polio
- RV: Protects against Rotavirus
- Varicella: Protects against Chickenpox

All of these vaccines are injections (shots), except for rotavirus, which is given orally, and one type of influenza vaccine, which is sprayed into the nose.

## Vaccine safety

- Vaccination is very safe and effective. Vaccines are thoroughly tested before being approved for public use and monitored carefully by doctors, researchers, and public health officials.
- Vaccines may cause pain, redness, or tenderness at the site of injection.
- Serious side effects following vaccination, such as severe allergic reaction, are very rare.
- The disease-prevention benefits of getting vaccines are much greater than the possible side effects for almost all children.

Immunization is one of the most important things a parent can do to protect their children's health. If we continue vaccinating now, and vaccinating completely, parents in the future may be able to trust that some diseases of today will no longer be around to harm their children in the future. Please talk to your child's doctor to ensure that your child is up-to-date on immunizations.

## Additional Resources

CDC – Vaccines and Immunizations <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/index.html>

CDC – Parent's Guide to Childhood Immunizations <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/parents-guide/default.htm>

CDC – Child & Adolescent Immunization Schedule <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/index.html>

CDC – Vaccines for Children program (VFC) <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/index.html>

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