

Infection Prevention and You



Vaccination saves lives

Why is vaccination needed?

Vaccination protects our future. It not only protects us and our children—it protects future generations by stopping the spread of disease. Vaccination saves lives. Thanks to vaccines, many deadly diseases have become rare in the United States. It is hard to imagine the devastating effects that diseases like polio and measles can have on a family and a community; if we stop vaccinating, these diseases will come back. The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) lists 10 reasons to be vaccinated. Here are true stories of how vaccine-preventable diseases impacted families in America.

Who needs vaccinations?

Everyone needs to be vaccinated. Life-protecting vaccinations are recommended throughout our lives, beginning at birth before newborns leave the hospital. Adults also need vaccinations—you never outgrow vaccines! In fact, everyone over the age of 6 months of age should get a flu vaccine each year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides vaccine schedules for infants and children; preteens and teens; and adults. The Vaccines for Children program provides vaccinations to children who cannot afford them.

Are vaccines safe?

Yes, vaccines are very safe. Some people may just get mild side effects like soreness or redness around the injection site and perhaps a low-grade fever. You should receive a VIS (Vaccine Information Statement) each time you get a vaccine.

Sometimes the media send mixed messages on the appropriateness and effectiveness of vaccines, causing confusion. Therefore, it is important to rely on organizations like the CDC and NFID (National Foundation for Infectious Diseases) for reliable, accurate information.

Remember:

It is much easier and more cost effective to prevent a disease rather than to treat it—it could even save a life!

Not only do vaccinations protect the recipient, they also prevent the disease and illness from spreading to others. Maintaining an ongoing relationship with a medical provider is one of the best ways to ensure that you and your family receive necessary and age-appropriate vaccinations. Your healthcare professional can provide the information you need for the vaccines you are seeking.

The bottom line is that vaccines protect us and our future generations. They have reduced and, in some instances, eliminated the diseases that have caused epidemics and mortality just a few generations ago. Leading medical organizations all support vaccination and tell us that vaccines are safe. So don't leave your healthcare provider's office without making sure you and your loved ones have had all the vaccinations you need!

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Some common misconceptions about vaccines are:

Misconception #1: “We don’t need to vaccinate against rare diseases.”

It is because we have vaccines today that these diseases are so rare. However, due to our ability to travel worldwide, these rare and exotic diseases and illnesses can easily be re-introduced into our communities. By keeping our vaccinations up to date, we can significantly decrease our risk of catching and spreading these diseases.

Misconception #2: “The preservative thimerosal makes vaccines risky.”

Thimerosal is a mercury-based preservative that has been used in vaccines for many decades. According to the CDC, no harmful effects from thimerosal used in vaccines have been reported. As a precautionary measure, except for some flu vaccines, thimerosal was removed from preschool children vaccines in 2001.

Misconception #3: “Vaccines cause autism.”

According to the CDC, exposure to vaccines that contain thimerosal during pregnancy (prenatally), or as a young child, is not associated with any of the autism spectrum disorder outcomes.

Additional resources:

CDC Vaccines <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/Vaccines/Index1.html>

CDC—Vaccine safety: addressing common concerns <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/Concerns/Index.html>

NFID—Adolescent vaccination <http://www.adolescentvaccination.org/>

NFID—Adult vaccination <http://www.adultvaccination.org/>

National Public Health Information Coalition—National Immunization Awareness Month <http://www.nphic.org/niam>

Immunization Action Coalition—<http://www.immunize.org/>

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