

Vaccinations

Why does my child need to get vaccines?

Before vaccines were available, many children died from the 15 diseases we can now prevent. Chickenpox, whooping cough, the flu, measles, and meningitis are very dangerous and can still infect unvaccinated children.

Are vaccines safe?

Yes, vaccines save lives. The most common side effects are fever and soreness where the shot was given. Only one or two people per million have serious reactions. Death and serious harm from the disease are much more common than any risk from getting the shot.

Do vaccines cause autism?

No. Autism happens just as often in children who do not get shots as in those who do. The symptoms of autism first show up at about the same age that children receive the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine, so some parents think they are related. It has been proven that they are not.

Are all of these vaccines necessary?

If children are not vaccinated, they could easily get the disease from someone, even if that person does not have symptoms. Preventable diseases like measles, mumps, the flu, and whooping cough are still very common in other countries. Even in the United States, children die every year from these illnesses. There is no harm to a healthy child from receiving several vaccines at once.

If everyone else gets vaccines, why does it matter if my child doesn't get them?

Your child needs to be protected against these diseases as soon as it is safe to do so. For vaccinations to work, at least 90% to 95% of people need to get them. Vaccination also protects others you care about, such as grandparents, friends, and family members. Unvaccinated children can spread disease to children who are too young to be vaccinated or to people with weak immune systems, such as people with cancer.

What is the harm of separating or delaying vaccines?

The best protection is to start and finish every vaccine series on time so your child is not left unprotected against some diseases. Delaying shots just increases the time that your child can get the disease.

If you decide to not vaccinate or to delay vaccinations, remember to do the following when your child is ill. These steps could save your child's life.

- Visit your doctor.
- Tell the medical staff your child has not received all of his or her vaccines.
- Keep your child's vaccination record with you.
- Learn the early signs and symptoms of the disease your child is not vaccinated against.
- If you choose not to vaccinate your child, understand the risks and responsibilities.



Vaccinations *(continued)*

Where can I get more information on the safety of vaccinations?

Your doctor

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/concerns>

Immunization Action Coalition
<http://immunize.org/talking-about-vaccines/responding-to-parents.asp> and
<http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2070.pdf>

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Notes:

This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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