



Child Vaccinations: Don't Wait to Vaccinate

Approximately 4 million babies are born in the U.S. every year, and each requires 27 vaccinations before the age of two. Unfortunately, not all parents ensure their children are properly immunized.

Keeping Kids Healthy

Before vaccinations became widely available, diseases like measles, mumps, and whooping cough were common in childhood, and thousands were left blind, deaf, brain-damaged, or dead. Today vaccines have almost completely wiped out major diseases.

What is a Vaccination?

Vaccinations (or immunizations) contain an imitation virus, typically a live but weakened virus or an inactive bacteria virus, that is administered to protect against serious diseases. This virus causes the body to produce antibodies, which are special agents of the immune system that attack harmful elements inside the body. While fighting the imitation virus, the antibodies learn to recognize the real virus so they can attack it when the body is exposed to it.

Researchers have found that live virus vaccinations seem to provide longer immunity than inactive ones.

Vaccinations are usually administered in one of two ways: either through an injection or orally. Doctors have found that orally administered vaccines tend to have a higher chance of side effects or allergic reactions than injected vaccines.

Possible Side Effects

Overall, vaccines are safe to administer and typically only cause minor side effects. According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the risk of contracting a disease is more dangerous than the risk of a serious reaction to a vaccination. However, there are a few rare cases of major reactions in children, such as:

- Extremely high fever – A rectal temperature reading of 105 degrees or more
- Inconsolable crying – More than 3 hours of crying without stopping, or an abnormal cry.
- Convulsions – Full body shaking, twitching, or jerking in response to a high fever
- Severe allergic reactions – Swelling in the mouth and

throat, wheezing and breathing difficulties, dizziness, paleness, or limpness.

Should your child suffer from any of the above symptoms after receiving their vaccinations, call your doctor immediately!

Vaccination Facts

Although today in the United States epidemics of infectious diseases are rare, germs that cause diseases still exist and may affect people who are not protected by vaccines. The statistics show that there is still a high need to continue to vaccinate:

- From 2001 to 2003, there were 28,998 cases of pertussis (whooping cough) reported in the U.S. Forty-four percent of those cases were in children under the age of ten.



- Because of a decline in children getting vaccinations for measles, the disease resurfaced between 1989 and 1991, resulting in 55,000 cases and 132 deaths.
- Influenza typically claims about 36,000 lives each year in the United States, and about 200,000 people are hospitalized due to its complications.
- Pneumococcal infections cause 40,000 deaths yearly in the U.S.
- Hepatitis B is responsible for nearly 5,000 U.S. deaths each year, due to complications from the disease.
- Diphtheria kills between five and ten percent of those who catch it, with its death rate highest among children under the age of five.

In addition, vaccinations are necessary because they can prevent repeated epidemics of infectious diseases:

- **Pertussis** – Before vaccinations, nearly every child got whooping cough, resulting in 9,000 deaths annually.
- **Mumps** – Before vaccinations, it was a major cause of deafness in children.
- **Rubella** – Before vaccinations, an epidemic occurred in 1964 and 1965, resulting in 2,100 newborn deaths.

- **Haemophilus** – Before vaccinations, it was once one of the most common causes of deadly meningitis in children. One in 200 children developed it by the age of five.
- **Polio** – Before vaccinations, between 13,000 and 20,000 cases were reported annually.
- **Varicella (chickenpox)** – Before vaccinations, it was responsible for 4 million reported cases, 11,000 hospitalizations, and 100 deaths annually.

Do I Need to Vaccinate?

Prevention is always better than treatment. Experts recommend that all children be routinely vaccinated. The number of children currently being vaccinated in the United States is very high, averaging 90 percent. And, as previously mentioned, vaccines are responsible for controlling many infectious diseases that at one time were very common and very deadly.

Scientists, doctors, and other healthcare professionals extensively test the vaccines to make sure they are safe and effective. In the United States, the FDA reviews all the test results and then decides if it will approve a vaccine for use.

When Should I Vaccinate?

Newborns are immune to many diseases because of

antibodies they have acquired from their mothers while in the womb. These antibodies only last for about a month to a year after birth, so it is best to vaccinate children when they are babies. However, it is never too late.

By vaccinating your child on time, you will not have to worry about them becoming infected or infecting others, especially once they reach school age when the risk increases.

Health Insurance

Vaccinations are covered by most insurance programs, but because of their importance they are available even to those without insurance. If you are not insured and cannot afford your child's vaccinations, contact your city, county, or state health department. They can direct you where to go for help with vaccinations.

If you are unsure when you should take your child in for their vaccinations, call your doctor, clinic, or local health department for information and vaccination schedules.

For more information, please contact:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

National Immunization Hotline, 1-800-232-2522; www.cdc.gov/vaccines

Day Care Danger

Currently, in the United States, there are 7 million children under the age of 6 enrolled in day care. Researchers have found that children in day care are more likely to get sick because of all the germs and contagious diseases carried by other children.