a parent's guide to

Childhood Vaccines

Protecting our most precious

What Vaccines Are:

Vaccines are products that protect us against serious, often deadly diseases, by helping our body's natural defense - the immune system - to fight them off. Vaccines mimic what happens in the body when it is attacked by a germ (usually a virus or a bacteria) without making us sick. Most vaccines contain killed or weakened germs, but they do not cause the disease they prevent or put the child at risk.

What Vaccines Do:

Vaccines are like teachers. They teach your child's immune system to protect them from deadly diseases. When your child gets a vaccine, the immune system gets to work right away. It takes what it learned from the vaccine so it can be ready if your child is exposed to harmful germs.

All of us are exposed to germs every day. Some might cause a cold or a minor illness. But then there are more dangerous viruses and bacteria that can make children very sick. Diseases like measles, diphtheria, and polio used to sicken and kill thousands of children. That's why it's important to get vaccinated—so your immune system will know what to do.

What is Inside a Vaccine?

Active Ingredients

Active ingredients are a small amount of the harmless form of the bacteria or virus you are being immunized against.

Residuals

Residuals are small leftovers of ingredients that helped make the vaccine. These could be egg protein, yeast protein, or antibiotics.

Adjuvants

Adjuvants boost the body's response to the vaccine, which makes it work better. Aluminum salt is a common adjuvant and can also be found in deodorant or antacids (like Tums®).

Preservative & Stabilizers

Stabilizers keep the vaccine effective after it's made. Preservatives are used in small amounts to prevent bacteria or fungi from contaminating the vaccine after it's made. These ingredients are found in things like soap and even Jell-O mix.

Water

Water is the main ingredient.

Why Vaccinate?

Vaccinations protect your child against serious diseases. They do this by teaching your immune system to watch for certain bacteria and viruses and to react quickly.

Vaccinating your baby protects against serious diseases like measles, whooping cough, polio, tetanus (lockjaw), two forms of hepatitis, chickenpox, severe diarrhea, influenza, COVID-19, and more. Vaccines won't protect children from all minor illnesses, but they can prevent many serious diseases.

Why does my baby needs these vaccines if the diseases are rare now?

- Some of these diseases are almost gone, but if babies are not protected, they can get sick if they are ever exposed, even once.
- Some diseases are common in others parts of the world and are just a plane ride away.
- Some diseases, such as measles and whooping cough, spread very easily, so babies need protection from these diseases.
- If we stop vaccinating against these diseases, many more people will become infected.
- Vaccinating your child will keep them safe.

14 Diseases You Almost Forgot About Thanks to Vaccines

Learn more about 14 different diseases that childhood vaccines help prevent.

HealthyChildren.org / Aug 12, 2016

Common Questions

Vaccines help your body stop an infection before it starts. They help you and your child avoid infections that can be severe or deadly. They also protect others who cannot receive vaccines like babies who are too young to be fully vaccinated, pregnant women, and immunocompromised people. Here are answers to other questions about vaccines:

Why does my child need so many vaccines?

Vaccines for children are timed carefully. Vaccines are given when protection inherited from the mother fades and the child's immune system is ready, but before kids come in contact with the germs that cause real infections.

Is it OK to pick and choose the vaccines my child gets?

Skipping some vaccines leaves your child without protection and allows your child to spread disease to others. Because diseases are still spreading in many parts of the world, skipping vaccines puts your child at risk in the future.

Doesn't breastfeeding protect my baby?

Breastfeeding has many benefits, including short-term immunity from some illnesses. Vaccines help to protect against the serious diseases that breastfeeding alone cannot prevent.

Isn't natural immunity better than a vaccine?

Natural immunity is a good thing, but some diseases can do damage that can't be reversed. Vaccines teach your immune system how to fight these diseases, without the risk of complications, including death.

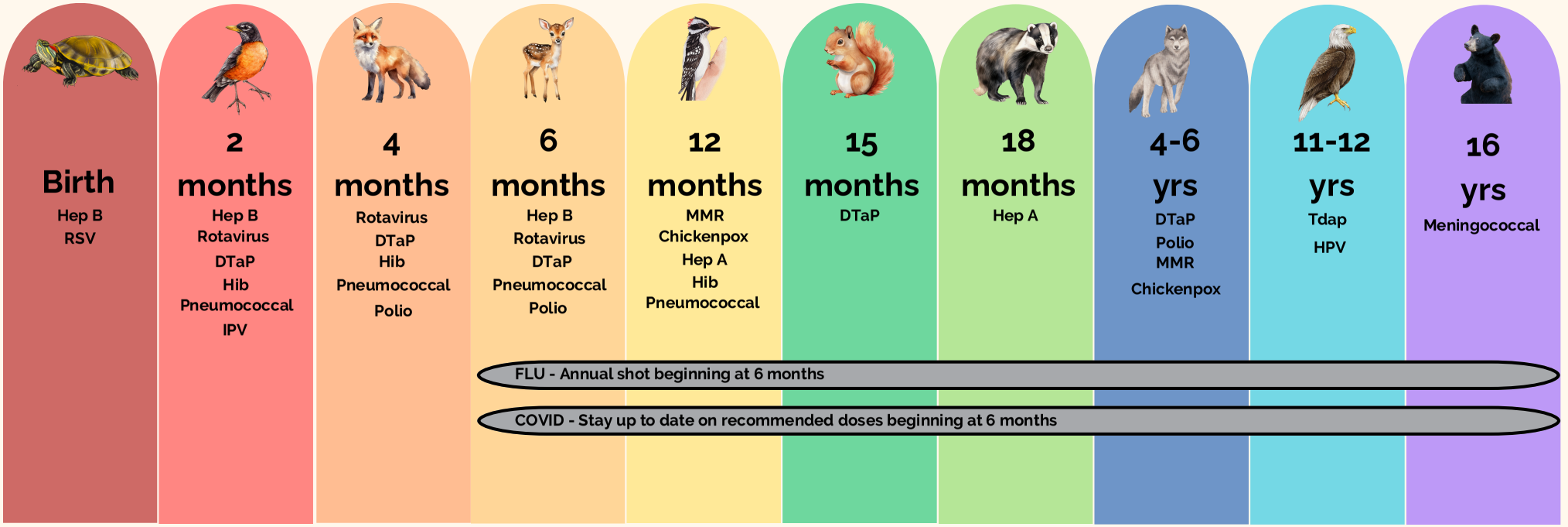
Do childhood vaccines cause autism?

Vaccines do not cause autism. The original study that suggested this connection in 1998 was based on scientific errors. That study was removed from the scientific record in 2010.

Will a vaccine give me the disease?

Some people think vaccinations make them sick because they have a headache, fever, or other symptoms after getting a vaccine. But the immune system causes these symptoms. They are a sign that the immune system recognizes the vaccine and is preparing to fight the real infection.

Immunization Schedule



All About the Recommended Immunization Schedules

The American Academy of Pediatrics, in collaboration with the U.S. Centers for Disease...

HealthyChildren.org / Feb 5, 2019

Vaccines Your Child Needs

Vaccinations have reduced the number of infections from vaccine-preventable diseases by more than 90%! Yet many parents still question their safety...

HealthyChildren.org / Jul 24, 2018

What diseases do these vaccines protect against?

Vaccine-Preventable Disease	Disease Complications
RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) Contagious viral infection of the nose, throat, and sometimes lungs; spread through air and direct contact	Infection of the lungs (pneumonia) and small airways of the lunch; especially dangerous for infants and young children
Hep B (Hepatitis B) Contagious viral infection of the liver; spread through contact with infected bodily fluids such as blood or semen	Chronic liver infection, liver failure, liver cancer, death
Rotavirus Contagious bacterial infection of the gut; spread through the mouth from hands and food contaminated with stool.	Severe diarrhea, dehydration, death
Diphtheria* Contagious bacterial infection of the nose, throat, and sometimes lungs; spread through air and direct contact	Swelling of the heart muscle, heart failure, coma, paralysis, death
Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Contagious viral infection of the liver; spread through contact with infected bodily fluids such as blood or semen	Infection of the lungs (pneumonia), death; especially dangerous for babies
Tetanus (Lockjaw)* Bacterial infection of brain and nerves caused by spores found in soil and dust everywhere; spores enter the body through wounds or broken skin	Seizures, broken bones, difficulty breathing, death
Hib (*Haemophilus influenzae* type b) Contagious bacterial infection of the lungs, brain and spinal cord, or bloodstream; spread through air and direct contact	Depends on the part of the body infected, but can include brain damage, hearing loss, loss of arm or leg, death
Penumococcal Bacterial infections of ears, sinuses, lungs, or bloodstream; spread through direct contact with respiratory droplets like saliva or mucus	Depends on the part of the body infected, but can include infection of the lungs (pneumonia), blood poisoning, infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord, death
Polio Contagious viral infection of nerves and brain; spread through the mouth from stool on contaminated hands, food or liquid, and by air and direct contact	Paralysis, death
COVID-19 Contagious viral infection of the nose, throat, or lungs; may feel like a cold or flu. Spread through air and direct contact	Infection of the lungs (pneumonia); blood clots; liver, heart or kidney damage; long COVID; death
Influenza (Flu) Contagious viral infection of the nose, throat, and sometimes lungs; spread through air and direct contact	Infection of the lungs (pneumonia), sinus and ear infections, worsening of underlying heart or lung conditions, death
Measles (Rubeola)ǂ Contagious viral infection that causes high fever, cough, red eyes, runny nose, and rash; spread through air and direct contact	Brain swelling, infection of the lungs (pneumonia), death
Mumpsǂ Contagious viral infection that causes fever, tiredness, swollen cheeks, and tender swollen jaw; spread through air and direct contact	Brain swelling, painful and swollen testicles or ovaries, deafness, death
Rubella (German Measles)ǂ Contagious viral infection that causes low-grade fever, sore throat, and rash; spread through air and direct contact	Very dangerous in pregnant people; can cause miscarriage or stillbirth, premature delivery, severe birth defects
Chickenpox (Varicella) Contagious viral infection that causes fever, headache, and an itchy, blistering rash; spread through air and direct contact	Infected sores, brain swelling, infection of the lungs (pneumonia), death
Hepatitis A Contagious viral infection of the liver; spread by contaminated food or drink or close contact with an infected person	Liver failure, death
HPV (Human papillomavirus) Contagious viral infection spread by close skin-to-skin touching, including during sex	Genital warts and many types of cancers later in life, including cancers of the cervix, vagina, penis, anus, and throat
Meningococcal Contagious bacterial infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord or the bloodstream; spread through air and direct contact	Loss of arm or leg, deafness, seizures, death

***DTaP** protects against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis

ǂMMR protects against measles, mumps, and rubella

What Happens If We Don't Vaccinate?

Your child is at risk for developing a vaccine-preventable disease

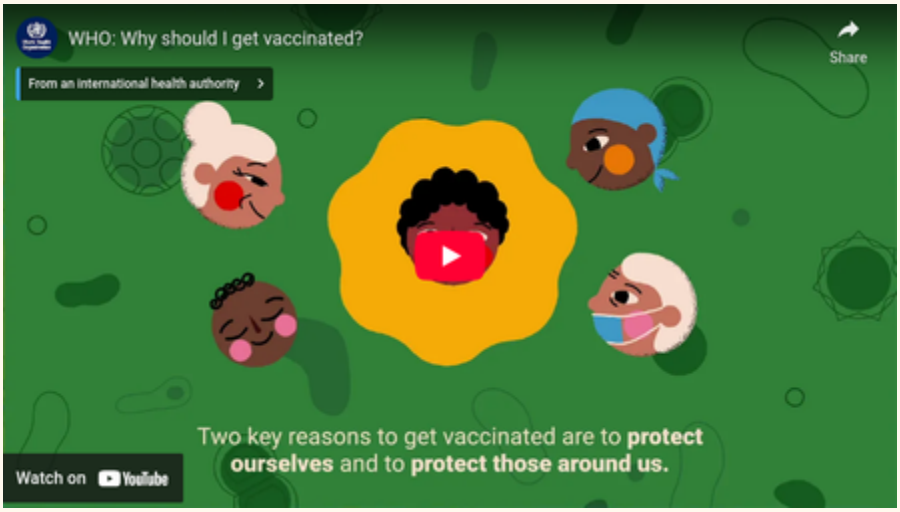
Your child is more susceptible to preventable illnesses such as influenza (flu), pertussis (whooping cough), measles, chickenpox, and more.

Your child can infect others in the community

Children who are not vaccinated can transmit vaccine-preventable disease at schools and in the community. Unvaccinated children can infect babies who are too young to be fully immunized or people of any age who cant be immunized for medical reasons.

Your child may have to be excluded from school or child care

During disease outbreaks, unvaccinated children may be excluded from school or child care to protect them and others. This can cause hardship for the child and parent.



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Public Health

www.racinecounty.com/publichealth
262-898-4460

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CITY OF RACINE, WISCONSIN
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https://cityofracine.org/health
262-636-9201