



General Child(ren) Vaccine

Frequently Asked Questions

October 2020

Is there a link between vaccines and autism?

No. Scientific studies and reviews continue to show no relationship between vaccines and autism. Some people have suggested that thimerosal (a compound that contains mercury) in vaccines given to infants and young children might be a cause of autism. Others have suggested that the MMR (measles- mumps-rubella) vaccine may be linked to autism. However, numerous scientists and researchers have studied and continue to study the MMR vaccine and thimerosal, and they reach the same conclusion: there is no link between MMR vaccine or thimerosal and autism.

Can vaccines “overload” my baby’s immune system?

Vaccines do not overload the immune system. Vaccines give your child the antibodies they need to fight off serious vaccine-preventable diseases. Every day, a healthy baby’s immune system successfully fights off thousands of germs. Antigens are parts of germs that cause the body’s immune system to go to work to build antibodies, which fight off diseases. The antigens in vaccines come from the germs themselves, but the germs are weakened or killed so they cannot cause serious illness. Even if babies receive several vaccinations in one day, vaccines contain only a tiny fraction of the antigens they encounter every day in their environment.

Why are so many doses needed for each vaccine?

Getting every recommended dose of each vaccine provides your child with the best protection possible. Depending on the vaccine, your child will need more than one dose to build high enough immunity to prevent disease or to boost immunity that fades over time. Your child may also receive more than one dose to make sure they are protected if they did not get immunity from a first dose, or to protect them against germs that change over time, like flu. Every dose is important because each protects against infectious diseases that can be especially serious for infants and very young children.

Why do vaccines start so early?

The recommended schedule protects infants and children by providing immunity early in life, before they come into contact with life-threatening diseases. Children receive immunization early because they are susceptible to diseases at a young age. The consequences of these diseases can be very serious, even life-threatening, for infants and young children.

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What do you think of delaying some vaccines or following a non-standard schedule?

Children do not receive any known benefits from following schedules that delay vaccines. Infants and young children who follow immunization schedules that spread out or leave out shots are at risk of developing diseases during the time you delay their shots. Some vaccine preventable diseases remain common in the United States and children may be exposed to these diseases during the time they are not protected by vaccines, placing them at risk for a serious case of the disease that might cause hospitalization or death.

What's wrong with delaying some of my baby's vaccines if I'm planning to get them all eventually?

Young children have the highest risk of having a serious case of disease that could cause hospitalization or death. Delaying or spreading out vaccine doses leaves your child unprotected during the time when they need vaccine protection the most. For example, diseases such as Hib or pneumococcus almost always occur in the first 2 years of a baby's life. And some diseases, like Hepatitis B and whooping cough (pertussis), are more serious when babies get them at a younger age. Vaccinating your child according to the CDC's recommended immunization schedule means you can help protect him at a young age.

My child is sick right now. Is it okay for her to still get shots?

Talk with your child's doctor; but, children can usually get vaccinated even if they have a mild illness like: a cold, earache, mild fever, or diarrhea. If the doctor says it is okay, your child can still get vaccinated.

Don't infants have natural immunity? Isn't natural immunity better than the kind from vaccines?

Babies may get some temporary immunity (protection) from mom during the last few weeks of pregnancy, but only for diseases to which mom is immune. Breastfeeding may also protect your baby temporarily from minor infections, like colds. These antibodies do not last long, leaving your baby vulnerable to disease. Natural immunity occurs when your child is exposed to a disease and becomes infected. It is true that natural immunity usually results in better immunity than vaccination, but the risks are much greater. A natural chickenpox infection may result in pneumonia, whereas the vaccine might only cause a sore arm for a couple of days.

Can't I just wait to vaccinate my baby, since he isn't in child care, where he could be exposed to diseases?

No, even young children who are cared for at home can be exposed to vaccine preventable diseases, so it's important for them to get all their vaccines at the recommended ages. Children can catch these illnesses from any number of people or places, including from parents, brothers or sisters, visitors to their home, on playgrounds or even at the grocery store. Your baby may come in contact with people throughout the day, some of whom may be sick, but do not know it yet. If someone has a vaccine preventable disease, they may not have symptoms, or the symptoms may be mild, and they can end up spreading disease to babies or young children. Remember, many of these diseases can be especially dangerous to young children so it is safest to vaccinate your child at the recommended ages for protection, whether or not the baby is in child care.

[more](#)



Do I have to vaccinate my baby on schedule if I'm breastfeeding them?

Yes, even breastfed babies need to be protected with vaccines at the recommended ages. The immune system is not fully developed at birth, which puts newborns at greater risk for infections. Breast milk provides important protection from some infections as your baby's immune system is developing. For example, babies who are breastfed have a lower risk of ear infections, respiratory tract infections, and diarrhea. However, breast milk does not protect children against all diseases. Even in breastfed infants, vaccines are the most effective way to prevent many diseases. Your baby needs the long-term protection that can only come from making sure he receives all his vaccines according to the CDC's recommended schedule.

I got the whooping cough and flu vaccines during my pregnancy. Why does my baby need these vaccines too?

The protection (antibodies) you passed to your baby before birth will give him some early protection against whooping cough and flu. However, these antibodies will only give him short-term protection. It is very important for your baby to get vaccines on-time, so they can start building their own protection against these serious diseases.

Why Should I Have My Child Immunized if All the Other Kids in School Are Immunized?

It is true that a single child's chance of catching a disease is low if everyone else is immunized. But, your child is also exposed to people other than just those in school. And if one person thinks about skipping vaccines, chances are that others are thinking the same thing. Each child who isn't immunized gives highly contagious diseases one more chance to spread.

Although vaccination rates are fairly high in the United States, there's no reliable way to know if every person your child comes into contact with has been vaccinated, particularly now that so many people travel to and from other countries. So, the best way to protect your kids is through immunization.



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