

10 Things You Need to Know About Immunizations

1. Why should my child be immunized?

Children need immunizations (shots) to protect them from dangerous childhood diseases. These diseases can have serious complications and even kill children.

2. What diseases do childhood vaccines prevent?

- measles
- mumps
- polio
- rubella (German Measles)
- pertussis (whooping cough)
- diphtheria
- tetanus (lockjaw)
- *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib disease—a major cause of bacterial meningitis)
- hepatitis A and B
- varicella (chickenpox)
- pneumococcal disease (causes bacterial meningitis and blood infections)
- meningococcal
- rotavirus
- human papillomavirus

3. How many shots does my child need?

The following vaccinations are recommended by age 2 and can be given over five visits to a doctor or clinic:

- four doses of diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine (DTaP)
- three to four doses of Hib vaccine
- four doses of pneumococcal vaccine
- three doses of polio vaccine
- two doses of hepatitis A vaccine
- three doses of hepatitis B vaccine
- one dose of measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (MMR)
- three doses of rotavirus vaccine
- one dose of varicella vaccine
- two to three doses of influenza vaccine (for those ages 6 months and older; number of doses depends on child's birthday)

4. Do these vaccines have any side effects?

Side effects can occur with any medicine, including vaccines. Depending on the vaccine, these can include: slight fever, rash or soreness at the site of injection. Slight discomfort is normal and should not be a cause for alarm. Your health care provider can give you additional information.

5. Can they cause serious reactions?

Yes, but serious reactions to vaccines are extremely rare. The risks of serious disease from not vaccinating are far greater than the risks of serious reaction to a vaccination.

6. What do I do if my child has a serious reaction?

If you think your child is experiencing a persistent or severe reaction, call your doctor or get the child to a doctor right away. Write down what happened and the date and time it happened. Ask your doctor, nurse or health department to file a Vaccine Adverse Event Report form or go to www.vaers.hhs.gov to file this form yourself electronically.

7. Why can't I wait until school to have my child immunized?

Children younger than 5 are especially susceptible to disease because their immune systems have not built up the necessary defenses to fight infection. By immunizing on time (by age 2), you can protect your child from disease and also protect others at school or day care.

8. Why is a vaccination health record important?

A vaccination health record helps you and your health care provider keep your child's vaccinations on schedule. If you move or change providers, having an accurate record might prevent your child from repeating vaccinations he has already had. A shot record should be started when your child receives his first vaccination and updated with each vaccination visit.

9. Where can I get free vaccines?

A federal program called Vaccines for Children provides free vaccines to eligible children, including those without health insurance coverage, all those who are enrolled in Medicaid, American Indians and Alaskan natives.

10. Where can I get more information?

Call the National Immunization Information Hotline at (800) 232-4636.

Questions about vaccines and vaccine-preventable diseases frequently asked by people calling the TTY Service Hotline can be viewed in American Sign Language at (888) 232-6348 (TTY hotline), www.vaccines.ashastd.org/ttyservice.ht.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/fs/gen/shouldknow.htm