



Immunization and Vaccines

Vaccines help protect you against serious diseases such as measles, polio, diphtheria, tetanus, and others ⁽¹⁾. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, these diseases have injured and killed many children and adults over the years ⁽²⁾:

- In the 1950's, polio paralyzed about 37,000 people and killed about 1,700 each year
- About 15,000 people a year died from diphtheria before there was a vaccine

Today, many children in the U.S. regularly get vaccinated. These vaccines are made with the same bacteria or viruses that cause the disease. However, in vaccines, the bacteria or virus has been *weakened* or *killed* to make the vaccine safe. Your immune system responds to the vaccine the same way it would if you had become ill; therefore, you develop protection or “*immunity*” from the disease ⁽²⁾.

Any vaccine can have side effects and they are usually minor. Possible side effects of a vaccine may include:

- low-grade fever
- soreness/redness/swelling at the injection site

- headache
- dizziness
- fatigue
- loss of appetite

In rare cases, a child may experience a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine. Although these types of severe reactions are a definite concern, vaccines are much safer than the diseases they prevent ⁽³⁾.

Your child can be vaccinated at a doctor's office or local health department. Important topics to discuss with your doctor *before* you decide to vaccinate include ⁽²⁾:

- Benefits and risks of vaccines
- Previous allergic reactions to a vaccine
- Conditions under which vaccination is not recommended
- Possible side effects of vaccines
- Information on the different vaccines, how they work in the body, and immunization schedules

For more information on immunization and vaccines, please visit the following web-links:

Immunization & Vaccine Information:

- [Basics and Common Questions](#)
- [Immunization Schedules and Forms \(Childhood, Adolescent, Adult\)](#)
- [All About Vaccines \(FDA's Interactive Website for Children\)](#)

References:

1. [U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health](#)
2. [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
3. [Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research](#)

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