



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 before there was a vaccine
- About 15,000 people a year died from diphtheria before there was a vaccine

Today, many children in the U.S. regularly get vaccinated. Vaccines are made with the same bacteria or virus that causes a disease, but they have 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*” to 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 reactions are concerning, vaccines are much safer than the diseases they prevent ⁽²⁾.

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
- Certain conditions where a vaccination is not recommended
- Possible vaccine side effects
- Information on 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:

- [Immunization Questions](#)
- [Immunization Schedules](#)
- [The Immune Platoon \(interactive website for children\)](#)
- [All About Pertussis \(Whooping Cough\)](#)

References:

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

Author: Karen Hulsmeier, R.N.

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