

# Vaccines: Questions & Answers



## **YOU HAVE QUESTIONS. WE HAVE ANSWERS.**

It's good to understand your child's medical care! Caregivers have questions about vaccines. These are some of the questions we've heard the most. The answers are based on science and are caregiver-approved.

Ask your child's primary care provider your questions too! They are a great source of information. When caregivers partner with providers, they get the information they need.

## **WHAT IS A VACCINE?**

**Vaccines teach your body to recognize a virus or disease right away and fight it. They help children and adults stay healthy.**

Vaccines are usually given as a shot. But they can also be a liquid you drink. Or they can be sprayed in the nose.

## **ARE VACCINES SAFE?**

**Yes, and here's why:**

Vaccines are researched in the lab for years. Vaccines are then tested with tons of volunteers. Testing helps scientists figure out how much you need. And how often you need to get vaccinations. The data from this testing is checked by scientists. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) must approve a vaccine before it can be used. It often takes about 10-15 years for a vaccine to be approved! Even after a vaccine is approved, the U.S. government continues to make sure it is safe.

## IS IT BETTER FOR KIDS TO GET SICK FROM A DISEASE AND GET IMMUNITY THAT WAY?

Children can build temporary immunity by surviving an infection or virus. But that can be dangerous. Children can get really sick or even die from the disease. This can happen even with common diseases like the flu. No one knows which child will have a mild case and which child will get really sick. **Getting immunity from a vaccine protects children from dying or other serious complications.**

## WHY DO PEOPLE SOMETIMES GET SICK FROM A DISEASE, EVEN IF THEY GOT THE VACCINE? LIKE WITH FLU OR COVID?

Viruses like the flu change all the time. Each year, scientists try to match the vaccine to the virus. Sometimes the match isn't perfect. But getting the vaccine keeps the illness mild, even if you do get it.

## ARE BABIES BORN WITH NATURAL IMMUNITY?

Babies are born with immunity from their mothers but need to build their own. Getting vaccines from the start makes sure they stay safe as their immune system grows strong.

## WHY DO YOUNG CHILDREN GET SO MANY VACCINES?

Before vaccines were available, many babies died from infections before their first birthday. This is why many vaccines are given in the first year. Vaccines protect very young children from the most common and most dangerous diseases.

## IS VACCINE INJURY A CONCERN?

Some children have mild side effects from vaccines. These can be a low fever, fussiness, or soreness where they got the shot. These symptoms go away quickly. The risk of a real vaccine injury is extremely low. **There is much more risk that a child will catch a severe illness from the disease itself.**

## DO VACCINES CAUSE AUTISM?

No. Vaccines do not cause autism. Tons of studies have been done on this across the world. Millions of babies have been studied. **There is no link between vaccines and autism.**

In 1998, a doctor wrote a paper saying that the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine caused autism. It was proven wrong. It was dishonest science.

**The truth is that autism is caused by changes in brain development.** Those changes happen very early, long before children get the MMR vaccine.

## MANY VACCINES ARE FOR DISEASES THAT ARE NOT AROUND ANYMORE. WHY DO WE STILL NEED THEM?

Think about a brick wall. Each of the bricks helps to keep the wall up. But—if you take away enough bricks, the wall will fall down. That is how immunity works. When kids get vaccines, they are adding bricks to build a strong wall. When a whole community builds a strong wall, everyone is protected from disease.

But when bricks come out of the wall, communities have a gap in protection. Disease will find that “hole” in the wall. And the disease may come back. This gap in immunity is what has happened with measles in some areas. Measles came back, even though it had been gone for years.

**Getting vaccines for diseases keeps all children safe from disease.**

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