

How do I know when to take my baby in for shots?

Your healthcare provider should give you a reminder when the next doses are due. If you are not sure, call your clinic or health-care provider to find out when you should bring your child back. Doses cannot be given too close together or immunity doesn't have time to build up. On the other hand, you don't want to delay your child's shots and get behind schedule. It takes time to catch up and during this time, your child remains unprotected against these diseases.

What if I miss an appointment? Does my baby have to get the shots all over again?

No. If your baby misses some doses, it's not necessary to start over. Your provider will continue from where he or she left off.

How do I keep track of my baby's shots?

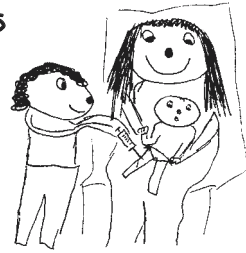
Your healthcare provider should give you a personal record card for your child's vaccinations. If you don't receive one, ask! Bring the card to all medical appointments. Whenever your child receives a vaccine, make sure the card gets updated. Your child will benefit by retaining an accurate vaccination record throughout his or her life.

What if my child isn't a baby anymore? Is it too late to get him or her vaccinated?

No. Although it's best to have your child begin vaccination as an infant, it's never too late to start. If your child has not received any, or all, of his/her shots, now is the time to start.

Everyone needs vaccinations!

If you can't afford shots or don't know where to get them, contact your city, county, or state health department, or call (800) 232-4636.



What if I can't afford to get my child vaccinated?

Vaccinations are usually free or low cost for children when families can't afford them. You can call (800) 232-4636 or your local health department to find out where to go for affordable vaccinations. Your child's health depends on it!

A friendly reminder for parents:

Adults need vaccinations, too! Call your clinic or health department to find out what vaccinations you might need or when your next ones are due. Your baby is counting on you!

Immunization Action Coalition

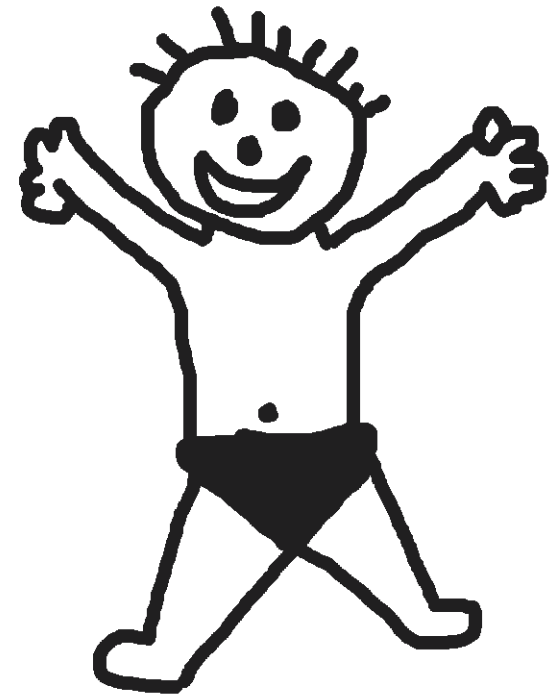
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www.vaccineinformation.org • www.immunize.org

The Immunization Action Coalition (IAC) encourages you to make and distribute copies of this brochure. It was adapted from The Child Vaccination Program, New York City. If you alter it, please acknowledge that it was adapted from The Child Vaccination Program and IAC. This brochure was reviewed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for technical accuracy.

www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4025.pdf • Item #P4025 (4/05)

Questions parents ask about baby shots

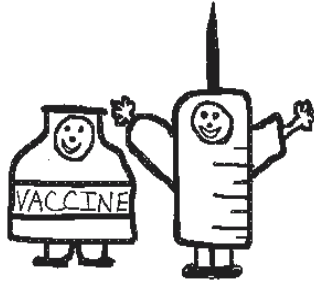


What are vaccinations?

Vaccinations (vaccines) protect your child against serious diseases by stimulating the immune system to create antibodies against certain bacteria or viruses. Most vaccinations are given as injections.

What diseases do vaccines protect against?

Vaccines protect against measles, mumps, rubella, influenza, hepatitis B, hepatitis A, polio, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), Hib disease, chickenpox, and



pneumococcal disease. Vaccines can't protect children from minor illnesses like colds, but they can keep children safe from many serious diseases.

Isn't all this talk about diseases just a way to scare parents so they'll bring their babies in for shots?

No. These diseases can injure and kill children in the U.S. Pertussis, for example, is currently a dangerous disease for infants. During 1997–2000, nearly 30,000 pertussis cases were reported; 62 resulted in death. In 2003 alone, 11,647 cases and 18 deaths from pertussis were reported. Influenza also takes a toll on children. During the 2003–04 influenza season, 40 states reported 152 influenza-related deaths among children younger than 18 years of age.

I don't know anybody who has had measles or rubella. Why does my baby need these shots?

You might not think that measles and rubella are a threat today because you don't see or hear much about them, but they are still around. These diseases are common in other parts of the world and are just a plane ride away. If we stop vaccinating against these diseases, many more people will become infected. Vaccinating your child will keep him or her safe.

Isn't there some way besides vaccination to protect my baby against these diseases?

No. Breastfeeding offers temporary immunity against some minor infections like colds, but it is not an effective means of protecting a child from the specific diseases preventable by vaccines. Likewise, vitamins don't protect against the specific bacteria and viruses that cause these serious diseases.

Of course, infection usually results in immunity, and some parents think that getting the "natural" disease is preferable to "artificial" vaccination. Some even arrange chickenpox "parties" to ensure their child is infected. However, the price paid for natural disease can include paralysis, retardation, liver cancer, deafness, blindness, or even death. Vaccination is definitely a better choice!

Are vaccinations safe?

Vaccines are safe, and researchers continually work to make sure they become even safer. Every vaccine undergoes many tests before

being licensed, and its safety continues to be monitored as long as the vaccine is in use.

Most side effects from vaccination are minor, such as soreness where the injection was given or a low-grade fever. These side effects do not last long and are treatable. Serious reactions are very rare. The tiny risk of a serious vaccine reaction has to be weighed against the very real risk of getting a dangerous vaccine-preventable disease. If you have concerns or questions, talk to your child's healthcare provider.



What if my baby has a cold or fever, or is taking antibiotics? Can he or she still get vaccinated?

Yes. Your child can still be vaccinated if he or she has a mild illness, a low-grade fever, or is taking antibiotics. Ask your child's healthcare provider if you have questions.

How many times do I need to bring my baby in for vaccinations?

At least four visits are needed before age two, but the visits can be timed to coincide with well-child check-ups. Your baby should get the first vaccine (hepatitis B) shortly after birth, while still in the hospital. Multiple visits during the first two years are necessary because there are thirteen diseases your baby can be protected against, and most require several doses of vaccine for optimal protection.