

Questions Parents Ask About Vaccinations for Babies

Why are vaccinations important?

Vaccinations protect your child against serious diseases. They do this by teaching your immune system to watch for certain bacteria and viruses and to react quickly.

Why are vaccinations important?

Vaccinating your baby protects against serious diseases like measles, whooping cough, polio, tetanus (lockjaw), two forms of hepatitis, chickenpox, severe diarrhea, influenza, COVID-19, and more. Vaccines won't protect children from all minor illnesses, but they can prevent many serious diseases.

Why does my baby need these vaccines if the diseases are rare now?

- Some of these diseases are almost gone, but if your baby is not protected, she can get sick if she is ever exposed even once.
- Some diseases are common in others parts of the world and are just a plane ride away.
- Some diseases, such as measles and whooping cough, spread very easily, so babies need protection from unvaccinated people.
- If we stop vaccinating against these diseases, many more people will become infected.
- Vaccinating your child will keep him or her safe.

Are there better ways to protect my baby against these diseases?

- Vaccines are the most reliable way to keep babies safe from infection
- Breastfeeding has many benefits, including short-term immunity from some illnesses. Still, experts agree that it does not protect babies from diseases prevented by vaccines.
- Vitamins won't protect against the bacteria and viruses that cause these serious diseases.
- Chiropractic remedies, naturopathy, and homeopathy do not work to prevent vaccine-preventable diseases.

If a baby gets certain diseases, he may develop "natural" immunity. But he must go through the disease before he gets natural immunity. That illness may be terrible and leave him with long-term disabilities such as brain injury, paralysis, deafness, blindness, or even death. When you consider disease risks, vaccination is definitely the better choice.

Are vaccines safe?

- Vaccines are safe. We know this because scientists constantly gather information to make sure vaccines are safe.
- Every vaccine in the U.S. goes through many levels of testing *before* being licensed. Vaccine safety continues to be monitored as long as the vaccine is in use.
- Most vaccine side effects are minor, such as feeling sore where the vaccine was given or a low-grade fever. These side effects go away quickly and are easy to treat.
- Serious reactions are very rare. The tiny risk of a serious vaccine reaction should be weighed against the very real risk of getting a dangerous vaccine-preventable disease.

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Can my baby get a vaccine if she has a cold or fever, or is taking antibiotics?	Yes. Your child can still get a vaccine, despite having a mild illness, a low-grade fever, or while taking an antibiotic. Talk with your child's healthcare provider if you have questions.
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How many times do I need to bring my baby in for vaccinations?	At least five visits are needed before age two years, but the visits can be timed to coincide with well-child check-ups. Your baby should get the first vaccine (hepatitis B) at birth, while still in the hospital. Multiple visits during the first two years are necessary because there are 15 diseases your baby can be protected against, and most require two or more doses of vaccine for the best protection.
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How do I know when to take my baby in for vaccinations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your healthcare provider should let you know when the next doses are due. If you are not sure, call your healthcare provider's office to find out. • 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 vaccinations and get behind schedule because during this time, your child remains unprotected against these serious diseases.
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If we miss an appointment, does my baby need to start the vaccines all over again?	No. If your baby misses some doses, just keep going with the series. Your provider will continue from where she left off.
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How do I keep track of my baby's vaccinations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After each vaccination visit, ask for a copy of the vaccination record. Whenever your child receives a vaccine, make sure your copy gets updated. • Bring your copy of the record to all visits. Take a picture of it with your smartphone after it is updated so you have a back-up copy. • Make sure your child's vaccination record is also in the state registry for safe keeping. Your child's healthcare provider enters all vaccination records in the state immunization registry for safe-keeping.
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What if I can't afford to get my child vaccinated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The U.S. Vaccines for Children program guarantees that vaccinations are free or low cost for all children younger than age 19 years when families can't afford them. • Call your healthcare provider or local/state health department to find out where to go for low-cost vaccinations. • You can get telephone numbers and website for state immunization programs at www.immunize.org/coordinators.
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Your child's health depends on timely vaccinations.