



GLOBAL HEALTH PHARMACY

ASK YOUR GLOBAL HEALTH PHARMACIST

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WHY CHILDHOOD VACCINES ARE ESSENTIAL

Have you decided *not* to vaccinate your child? Are you concerned about vaccine safety? Do you think diseases like measles and whooping cough are problems of the past? Please think again.

When you don't vaccinate, it may affect both you and your child as well as the whole community. Here is one example: As of May 29, 173 people in 21 states and Washington DC became sick with measles. The infection was traced back to Disneyland in California. More than 80 percent of these people had not had vaccines or had no proof of vaccination.

Here's another: In 2012, nearly 50,000 cases of whooping cough were reported. That's the biggest number in more than 50 years.

Herd immunity: Vaccines contain weak or dead versions of foreign substances. They make the immune system create antibodies to fight diseases. This not only protects your child, it also provides "herd immunity." It protects other children and adults from serious infections – especially those too young or too sick to be vaccinated.

In the last 20 years, vaccines:

- Saved more than 732,000 American lives.
- Prevented 322 million illnesses.
- Prevented 21 million hospital visits.
- Saved \$295 billion.

Most U.S. kids are up to date with their vaccines. These are for diseases such as polio, measles, mumps, whooping cough, and chickenpox. But coverage varies from state to state. In 2013, for example, fewer than 90 percent of 1.5-to-3-year-olds in 17 states had received their first dose of measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. And additionally, the numbers being vaccinated may also be dipping slightly.

SAFETY FIRST: One reason for this is that parents worry about the safety of vaccines. For example, some believe that the MMR vaccine increases the risk of autism. But study after study has found no link



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between the two. In 2004, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) concluded firmly that a vaccine preservative does *not* cause autism.

Researchers have also shown that vaccine schedules are generally safe and effective. They work in 85 to 99 percent of cases if you vaccinate before your child becomes sick.

It is true that vaccines can cause temporary side effects such as:

- 1) Redness and swelling at the injection site
- 2) Fever
- 3) Soreness where the shot was given

But, the risk of serious problems for most people is extremely small. Let the doctor know, though, if your child has a serious reaction – or a history of one – or has a history of allergies to food or medication. You can discuss whether or not to go ahead with more shots.

VACCINE SCHEDULES: Do you have questions about your child’s vaccine schedule? Or do you need to get caught up? Your Global Health Pharmacist can help point you in the right direction. For example, you can get a copy of current vaccine schedules from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Nothing herein constitutes medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, or is a substitute for professional advice. You should always seek the advice of your physician or other medical professional if you have questions or concerns about a medical condition

References:

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- 2) Health Day: Infectious-Disease Expert Debunks Common Vaccine Myths. Available at: http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_152498.html. Accessed July 3, 2015