

Frequently Asked Questions: Immunizing Your Child

I'M WORRIED ABOUT MY BABY'S SHOTS - ARE VACCINES SAFE?

Yes! Today's vaccines work best and are the safest in history. Vaccines must pass many tests. The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) tests new vaccines for up to 10 years before issuing the vaccine a license. All vaccines must be safe and proven to work well. Once the vaccine is being used, the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) monitor it through the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). Researchers look for any problem with a vaccine, inspect the problem, and decide what to do. When VAERS found a problem in the past, changes included:

- using different labels or packaging,
- sending safety alerts,
- inspecting manufacturers' records,
- and taking away the vaccine's license.

For more information about VAERS, visit www.vaers.hhs.gov or call the toll-free VAERS information line at 1-800-822-7967.

Sometimes vaccines can cause reactions like fever or soreness where the shot was given. Very rarely, people have an allergic reaction. Vaccines save lives and protect against the spread of disease. If you decide not to immunize your child, you put your child and other children around him or her at risk. Your child could catch a disease that is dangerous or deadly. Getting vaccinated is much safer than getting the disease. For more information, visit:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/vacsafe/vacsafe-parents.htm>.

DOES THE MEASLES-MUMPS-RUBELLA (MMR) VACCINE CAUSE AUTISM?

No! Scientific data does not show a link between the MMR vaccine and autism. Autism is usually discovered when a child is 18-30 months. Children get the MMR vaccine just before this age, so some people believe that the MMR vaccine causes autism. These people often have wrong information. For example, in 1998, Andrew Wakefield published a small study saying that MMR caused inflammatory bowel disease and autism. Later, his results were rejected because the study had mistakes. Even his co-authors agreed that the results were wrong. No other studies can find a link between the MMR vaccine and autism. Because of the study, many British parents refuse to let their children get the vaccine. Now there are outbreaks of measles and mumps in areas where many children are not vaccinated.

Other studies have been done, and none have found a link between MMR vaccine and autism ([click here](#)). In 2004, a report by the Institute of Medicine Immunization Safety Review Committee again said that there is no link between autism and the MMR vaccine. Some parents still question vaccine safety because the media gives false claims a lot of attention, and the Internet has wrong information that is easy to find ([click here](#)). Measles, mumps, and rubella are serious - protect your children by immunizing them at 12-15 months of age and again at 4-6 years of age. For more information, visit: <http://www.cispimmunize.org/fam/mmr> or <http://www.cdc.gov/nip/vacsafe/concerns/autism/autism-mmr.htm>

Got a question? Email us at cispimmunize@aap.org