

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Addressing Common  
Questions & Concerns



# CHILDHOOD VACCINES: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Are childhood vaccines safe?

Vaccines are very safe. The U.S. has a long-standing [safety system](#) that ensures vaccines are as safe as possible. Today's vaccines use only the [ingredients](#) they need to be as safe and effective as possible. Ingredients found in some vaccines:

- Keep the vaccine effective after manufacturing.
- Help boost the body's response to the vaccine.
- Kill viruses or inactivate toxins during the manufacturing process.
- Prevent contamination.

## What are the benefits of childhood vaccines?

Vaccines can prevent infectious diseases that once caused disability, serious illness or death in many infants, children and adults. Without vaccines, children are still at risk for getting these infectious diseases.

## What are the risks of childhood vaccines?

The benefits of preventing disease are much greater than the possible side effects for almost all children. Here is what you should know:

- The main risks associated with vaccines are side effects, which are almost always mild (redness and swelling at the injection site).
- Side effects go away within a few days.
- Serious side effects, such as a severe allergic reaction, are **very rare**.
- Doctors and clinic staff are trained to treat serious side effects, just in case.
- The only exceptions are when a child has a serious chronic medical condition, a disease that weakens the immune system, or has had a severe allergic reaction to a previous vaccine dose.

## Why are multiple doses needed?

Certain vaccines need more than one dose to build high enough immunity to prevent disease. Others need a boost for immunity that fades over time. Getting every recommended dose provides children with the best protection possible.



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## Why is it important to follow the recommended vaccination schedule?

Young children have the highest risk of experiencing a serious case of a disease that could lead to hospitalization or death. Delaying vaccine doses leaves your child unprotected when they need it the most. For example, diseases such as [Hib](#) or [pneumococcus](#) almost always occur in the first 2 years of a baby's life. And some diseases, like [hepatitis B](#) and [whooping cough](#) (pertussis), are more serious when babies get them.

## Why isn't it better to have the disease than become immune through vaccines?

Vaccine-preventable diseases have many serious complications that can be avoided through vaccination. Vaccines stimulate the immune system to produce an immune response similar to natural infection, but they do not cause the disease or put the vaccinated person at risk the disease's potential complications.

## Why do I need to vaccinate my child if all the other children around them are already immune.

Herd immunity occurs when a large portion of a community is vaccinated against a contagious disease, reducing the chance of an outbreak. People who cannot receive vaccines depend on this type of protection. However, if enough people rely on herd immunity as the method of preventing infection from vaccine-preventable diseases, herd immunity will soon disappear.

## Can a child get the disease from the vaccine?

Most vaccines are made from inactivated (killed) viruses, which makes it impossible to get the disease from the vaccine. A few vaccines contain live organisms, which can lead to mild cases of the disease. The [chickenpox vaccine](#), for example, can cause a child to develop a mild rash. This rash is not harmful and actually shows that the vaccine is working.

