



Vaccine Safety

Are vaccines safe?

The United States currently has the safest, most effective vaccine supply in history. Years of testing are required by law before a vaccine can be licensed. Once in use, vaccines are continually monitored for safety and effectiveness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) continually work to make already safe vaccines even safer. Before vaccines are licensed, the FDA requires they be extensively tested to ensure safety. This process can take 10 years or longer.

Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS)

Once a vaccine is in use, CDC and FDA monitor its side effects through the VAERS and the Vaccine Safety Data Link. Any hint of a problem with a vaccine prompts further investigations by CDC and FDA.

If researchers find that a vaccine may be causing a side effect, CDC and FDA will initiate actions appropriate to the nature of the problem including:

- changing of vaccine labels or packaging
- distributing safety alerts
- inspecting manufacturers' facilities and records
- withdrawing recommendations
- revoking the vaccine's license

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For more information about VAERS, visit www.vaers.hhs.gov or call 1-800-822-7967

Is it safe to vaccinate my child?

In most cases, vaccines are effective and cause no side effects or only mild reactions such as fever or soreness at the injection site. Very rarely, people experience more serious side effects, like allergic reactions. Severe reactions to vaccines occur so rarely that the risk is usually difficult to calculate. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if your child has health problems or known allergies to medications or food.

National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP).

In the rare event that a child is injured by a vaccine, he or she may be compensated through the VICP.

Some people should not get certain vaccines or should wait to get them.

- children with weak immune systems
- person who has had a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine
- A person with a mild, common illness, such as a cold with a low-grade fever, does not have to wait to be vaccinated.

Ask your healthcare provider for more information.

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For more information about VICP, visit <https://www.hrsa.gov/vaccine-compensation/index.html> or call 1-800-338-2382

What if I don't vaccinate my child?

Be aware of the risks.

Immunizations, like any medication, can cause side effects. However, a decision not to immunize a child also involves risk. It is a decision to put the child and others who come into contact with him or her at risk of contracting a disease that could be dangerous or deadly.

Consider Measles

- One out of 20 children with measles gets pneumonia.
- For every 1,000 children who get the disease, one or two will die from it.
- Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, up to 90% of the people close to that person who are not immune will also become infected.

Each year dozens of cases are imported from abroad into the U.S., threatening the health of people who have not been vaccinated and those for whom the vaccine was not effective. Further spread of measles can occur in communities with pockets of unvaccinated people.

From January to June 2019, there were 1,022 cases in the U.S., the greatest number reported in the U.S. since

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1992 and since measles was declared eliminated in 2000. Cases occurred primarily among unvaccinated people and some linked to travelers who brought measles back from other countries.

Unvaccinated children are also at risk from meningitis (swelling of the lining of the brain) caused by Hib (a severe bacterial infection), bloodstream infections caused by pneumococcus, deafness caused by mumps, and liver cancer caused by hepatitis B virus.

Basics and answers to common questions are available on the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/default.htm>

*For further information, contact the
Oklahoma City-County Health Department
(405) 425-4437*

Revised 06/2019

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