

# WELLNESS

## —WORKS—

Childhood immunizations are among the simplest preventative care measures you can take to ensure your child has a happy, healthy future.

### PROTECT YOUR CHILD WITH **IMMUNIZATIONS**

After World War II, the American medical community frantically attempted to curb the debilitating — and often deadly — effects of paralytic poliomyelitis (polio). Then, in 1952, Dr. Jonas Salk developed a vaccine that led to the near eradication of the disease in less than 50 years.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as many as 20,000 cases of paralytic polio were reported each year in the United States before the vaccine was available. Widespread epidemics often left thousands of victims — mostly children — in braces, crutches, wheelchairs and iron lungs for the rest of their lives. Now, polio has been completely eradicated from the western hemisphere, Europe and the western Pacific region.

With proper vaccination education and administration, the potential to eradicate many other childhood illnesses increases exponentially. Childhood immunizations are among the simplest preventative care measures you can take to ensure your child has a happy, healthy future.

#### PLAN AHEAD

One of the most important things you can do as a parent is to make sure your child gets the recommended immunizations. The vaccines children receive today can have lasting benefits on their health as well as the health of everyone around them.

The CDC outlines a vaccination schedule for children. Before six months, children should begin their first immunization series, with a second series coming in their first year. Make sure your child completes every series of shots, as one shot may not be effective and can even be harmful. Many vaccines, such as tetanus, require booster shots every few years, while others, such as flu shots, should be administered yearly.

To ensure your child is appropriately protected, keep a detailed record of vaccinations in your personal records. If you change pediatricians, ask that vaccination records be transferred to your new doctor. Some state immunization programs and schools keep a copy of vaccination records in a student's file, but do not depend on these sources, as many doctors, clinics, schools and public programs do not keep records for more than a few years. Your own files are likely to be your most complete and accurate resource.



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### PROTECT YOUR CHILD WITH **IMMUNIZATIONS**

#### TALK TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

- Make sure you are in compliance with state education and daycare vaccination laws.
- Address concerns you might have about vaccines, and ask about alternative doses and treatments.
- Ensure that your child has all the appropriate immunizations before traveling to another country.
- Ask to hold your child when shots are administered — it can be a comfort to you and your child.

#### RISKS AND REWARDS

Recently, some high-profile studies on the side effects of vaccinations have been discredited, and vaccines have been shown to provide critical protection from deadly diseases. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization and American Medical Association all support the inoculation of children.

Because many diseases have been eradicated in the United States, it is tempting to forgo the inoculation process. But without proper protection, international travel or even casual human contact can increase your child's susceptibility to these diseases. Being around anyone who has been exposed to a disease — even if that person hasn't contracted a disease or showed signs of any symptoms — can prove dangerous if your child has not been properly immunized.

Some parents choose not to inoculate their children for religious reasons or even scientific ideology. These personal reasons against vaccination should be respected and addressed by an appropriate healthcare professional.

While there are health risks associated with vaccines, they are generally mild and much rarer than the risks of the diseases inoculations protect against. Take comfort in knowing that you are protecting your family and doing your part to safeguard your community from devastating diseases.

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