Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People™

Vaccines & Immunizations

Immunization: The Basics

Definition of Terms

Let's start by defining several basic terms:

Immunity: Protection from an infectious disease. If you are immune to a disease, you can be exposed to it without becoming infected.

Vaccine: A product that stimulates a person's immune system to produce immunity to a specific disease, protecting the person from that disease. Vaccines are usually administered through needle injections, but can also be administered by mouth or sprayed into the nose.

Vaccination: The act of introducing a vaccine into the body to produce immunity to a specific disease.

Immunization: A process by which a person becomes protected against a disease through vaccination. This term is often used interchangeably with vaccination or inoculation.

Links to Basic Immunization Information

- Why immunize?
  Learn how getting vaccinated can protect your grandchildren, prevent epidemics, and eliminate diseases and their serious consequences.
- Brief overview of adult and childhood vaccine-preventable diseases and vaccines
  Read about the serious diseases that cause long-term illnesses, hospitalization, and even death, and which can be prevented by vaccines.
- 10 things a parent should know about immunizations
  Includes how many vaccine doses your child needs, the importance of keeping records, side effects, etc.
- How immunity works: types of immunity
  Learn the difference between the two basic types of immunity: active and passive.
- Common questions
  Find answers to common questions about immunization.
- What would happen if we stopped vaccinations?
  See how diseases that are rare today could once again become common—and deadly—if vaccination coverage does not continue at high levels.
- Life-cycle of an immunization program
  See how a successful immunization program can lead to a temporary increase in disease. Follow the evolution of a disease, from a time when there was no vaccine untilit is eradicated.

Related Information and Materials

- The Parents' Guide to Childhood Immunizations
  68-page booklet introducing parents to all childhood diseases and the vaccines that can protect children from them
- The Vaccines for Children Program
  The Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program offers vaccines at no cost for eligible children through VFC-enrolled doctors. Find out if your child qualifies. Vaccinating on time means healthier children, families and communities.

Related Pages

Vaccines: The Basics

Making the Vaccine Decision

Ingredients of Vaccines

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