

It's Wise to Immunize! Facts

It's that TIME OF THE YEAR! As parents plan for their children to go back to school, it's important that the entire family is up-to-date with their immunizations to prevent infections and diseases. Protect against vaccine-preventable diseases to create a healthier living environment for yourself and others.

- 1. Protect our future.** We don't vaccinate just to protect our children. We also vaccinate to protect our grandchildren and future generations. Immunization is a proven tool for controlling and even eradicating disease. As a result, some diseases (like polio and diphtheria) are becoming very rare in the U.S.
- 2. Don't wait!** Children under 5 are especially susceptible to disease because their immune systems have not built up the necessary defenses to fight infection. By immunizing on time (by age 2), you can protect your child from disease and also protect others at school or daycare.
- 3. Reduce the risk!** The flu vaccine doesn't prevent infection by all viruses that can cause flu-like symptoms. Keep in mind that receiving the vaccine isn't a guarantee that someone won't get sick! However, the flu vaccine reduces the average person's chances of catching the flu by up to 80% during the season.
- 4. How it Works...** Your immune system helps your body fight germs by producing substances to combat them. Once it does, the immune system "remembers" the germ and can fight it again. Vaccines contain germs that have been killed or weakened. When given to a healthy person, the vaccine triggers the immune system to respond and thus build immunity.
- 5. Safety First!** Each individual is unique and may react differently to immunization depending on the situation. Although a majority of vaccines are effective, there are some people who suffer mild to severe side effects. It's important to check with your health care provider prior to receiving any vaccination.
- 6. Stay informed!** There are several resources that provide immunization and screening guidelines such as a doctor's office, school nurses' office, or online. Keep in mind that recommendations often change, so it is important to discuss each vaccine with a doctor to determine which, if any, are needed.
- 7. Track and record!** Whether it is moving, traveling, or changing healthcare providers, keep and maintain an accurate health record. Ask your doctor or clinic to provide a personal immunization record form and have the doctor sign and date the form each time a vaccination is given to each family member.
- 8. Traveling Much?** There are recommended vaccines to protect travelers from illnesses present in other parts of the world and to prevent the importation of infectious diseases across international borders. Factors such as your destination, time spent in rural areas, season of travel, age, and health records, will determine which vaccinations are needed.

9. Healthy Aging. Some adults incorrectly assume that the vaccines they received as children will protect them for the rest of their lives. However, immunity fades as people age and become more susceptible to serious diseases. Adult immunizations are important in maintaining a strong and healthy life.

10. Explore Options! A federal program called Vaccines for Children (VFC) provides free vaccines to eligible children, including those without health insurance coverage, all those who are enrolled in Medicaid, American Indians and Alaskan Natives and those whose health insurance does not cover vaccines and go to Federally Qualified Health Clinics or Rural Health Centers. Visit CDC's website for more details and information.

These immunization facts were provided by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For more information about the 2010 DoD Monthly Wellness Awareness Campaigns, please visit: www.cpms.osd.mil/wellness

