

Immunizations

Why are they needed and how do I prepare my child?

Why does my child need immunizations?

Immunizations (vaccines) prevent diseases that can make children very sick, cause lifelong disabilities and even death. They prevent diseases by making the body resist them. This helps your child stay well.

Immunizations also protect others. When more people have been given vaccines, diseases that can be prevented by them cannot spread as much. This protects people with weaker immune systems, pregnant women and babies who cannot get vaccines.

Some vaccines prevent diseases that are no longer common in the United States, but these diseases are still common in other parts of the world. The diseases can travel to the United States when people visit other places and return home.

Some parents are unsure about whether to give their child immunizations. If you have questions or concerns after reading this, talk with your child's healthcare provider or visit the resources listed at the end of this flyer.

Are vaccines safe?

Yes. Vaccines are tested for years before they can be used. Vaccines continue to be studied even after they are approved for use.

Some children may have minor reactions to shots. These can include a slight fever or soreness where the shot is given. Serious reactions are rare. Your doctor or nurse can give you information on the benefits and risks of vaccines. The important thing to know is that getting the disease is much more harmful than getting the shot.



When should my child be immunized?

The hepatitis B vaccine is often given at birth. Most other shots are given starting when your child is 2 months old. Your child may get vaccines as part of well-child checkups or during visits for minor illnesses. Vaccines may be given even if your child has a cold, mild fever or is taking antibiotics.

For the best protection, start the shots on time and complete each series. The immunization schedules for children and teens are updated each year. It is best to follow these schedules. Visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/schedules/default.htm to view the schedules. There is one for 0- to 6-year-olds and one for 7- to 18-year-olds.

A child who has never been immunized or who has missed some shots can still catch up. Talk to your child's doctor or clinic.

Immunizations

Keep a copy of your child's shot record. When your child starts child care, school or camp in Washington state, you'll need to have a record of their immunizations. Call the Family Health Hotline at 800-322-2588 to get a free Washington State Lifetime Immunization Record Card.

How can I help my child prepare for a shot?

You can comfort your child while they get shots. If you are afraid, ask your spouse or a close friend or relative to come with you and your child. By keeping calm, you will help your child be less scared.

Tips for helping your child:

Babies

- Talk to your baby right before and during the shot. Distract them with a favorite toy, and comfort them with cuddles and hugs after the shot. You can also breastfeed or offer a bottle or pacifier during or after the shot.

Toddlers and preschoolers

- Use a calm voice to tell your child what will happen just before the shot is given. Be honest and say it may feel like a pinch, but it will be over quickly. Your child may want to act out giving a shot to a doll or teddy bear. Try to distract your child during the shot with a favorite toy, picture or book. When it is over, give praise and comfort.
- From age 4 and up, try teaching your child to "blow away" shot pain. Teach them to take a deep breath and blow, just like blowing bubbles, during the shot.

School-age

- Tell your child what is going to happen and that the shot helps to keep them safe and healthy. Give your child some control by letting them choose which arm will get the shot. Distract your child and help them relax by counting, singing, talking or reading during the shot. After the shot, praise and comfort your child.

To Learn More

- **The Family Health Hotline**
800-322-2588
Ask for a free copy of the Plain Talk about Childhood Immunizations booklet or download a copy online here: www.kingcounty.gov/healthServices/health/communicable/immunization/PlainTalk.aspx
- **National Network for Immunization Information**
www.immunizationinfo.org/parents
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) immunization information in English and Spanish**
800-232-4636 or www.cdc.gov/vaccines
- www.seattlechildrens.org
- **Seattle Children's Resource Line**
206-987-2500 or 866-987-2500
toll-free Washington, Alaska, Montana, Idaho
- **Your child's healthcare provider**

Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call Marketing Communications at 206-987-5205 or 206-987-2280 (TTY).

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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