



# Vaccine information for school-aged children



As a parent, you know the importance of maintaining your child's health, including regular check-ups and being up to date on vaccines - all of which contribute to their academic success. But vaccines aren't just important for school. Vaccines also protect you and your child from serious illness.

This handout is designed to help you understand how vaccines work, why vaccine schedules are important, and where to get vaccinated.

## Vaccines are safe

Within our bodies, each of us has warrior cells (antibodies) that stand guard and attack diseases. Vaccines help our warrior cells see and fight disease. For example, when we get the flu shot, the ingredients in the shot tell our warrior cells how to recognize and fight the flu. That is why if you get a flu shot, you are less likely to get sick with the flu.

Getting vaccinated can also reduce the seriousness of illness if you happen to get sick.

### Tests aren't just for students!

Vaccine testing involves people from different backgrounds, including American Indian and Alaska Native people. This helps ensure that vaccines are safe for everyone!

your body create tiny harmless proteins that look like (but aren't) COVID. When our warrior cells see these proteins, they attack them and learn how to recognize and fight the COVID-19 virus if we ever encounter it.

## Live-attenuated vaccines

Smallpox and chickenpox vaccines are both live-attenuated vaccines. These vaccines work by introducing a harmless, weakened "live" version of the virus or bacteria into your body. When our warrior cells see these weakened viruses or bacteria, they attack them and learn how to recognize and fight the real virus or bacteria if we ever encounter it.

## Different types of vaccines

There are different types of vaccines, but two of the most common types parents have questions about are messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines and live-attenuated vaccines.

### mRNA vaccines

The Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines are both mRNA vaccines. These vaccines work by helping

Sometimes people make the mistake of thinking that having mild vaccine side effects – like mild fever or a sore arm - means that they are “getting sick with the disease.” This is not true. Vaccines do not make you sick with the disease you are getting vaccinated against. Mild side effects are a good sign that your warrior cells are preparing to be able to recognize and fight disease.

## Vaccine schedules

During pregnancy and breast/chestfeeding, our warrior cells pass knowledge about how to recognize and fight certain illnesses to the unborn baby. However, this protection starts to fade weeks and months after birth. That’s why vaccinating your child according to the recommended vaccine schedule created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is important. Doing so helps ensure your child is protected before they come into contact with potentially life-threatening diseases.

Talk with your health provider about what vaccines your child needs and when. Also, check out the CDC’s recommended vaccine schedule at [www.cdc.gov/schedules/hcp/imz/child-adolescent.html](http://www.cdc.gov/schedules/hcp/imz/child-adolescent.html).

## Where to get vaccinated

To get vaccinated contact your local Tribal clinic, IHS facility, or visit a local pharmacy or clinic.

## Check in during a checkup

If you need more information about vaccination than your school can provide, consider reaching out to your health provider. They can talk with you and help explain why certain vaccines are safe and effective. They will also share other tools to keep you and your family healthy.

### Did you know that some vaccines require more than one shot?

Sometimes we need multiple shots against a disease to be more fully protected. Make sure to talk with your doctor about staying up to date on your and your child’s vaccines.



## Native Boost

For more info, visit Native Boost, a project dedicated to providing high-quality vaccination information for Native parents and their health providers: [www.npaihb.org/Native-Boost](http://www.npaihb.org/Native-Boost).

