



Why Vaccines Are Important



As a parent, you know the importance of car seats, seat belts, handwashing, and other ways of keeping your child safe. But did you know that one of the best ways to protect your child is by making sure they're vaccinated?

Vaccines are not just important because your child's school or daycare requires them. They can also protect your child from serious illnesses - like whooping cough, measles, and chickenpox.

This handout is designed to help you understand the ins and outs of vaccines, so you can take care of yourself and your family.

How vaccines work

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.

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

What's in a vaccine?

Vaccines contain natural ingredients common in the foods we eat, including sugars and proteins. These ingredients teach your body how to protect itself by calling upon your body's defense systems. For example, some vaccine ingredients make your warrior cells stronger and better able to respond to an attack.

Tests aren't just for students!

Each vaccine goes through many rounds of safety tests, which may take years and thousands of volunteers. Important questions are considered during vaccine testing, like "Is the vaccine safe?" and "How does the body react to it?" Vaccine testing also helps us learn about any possible side effects.

Mild vaccine side effects can actually be a good sign

Most vaccines have mild side effects, like fever or soreness, that go away in a few days. Mild side effects are a good sign that your warrior cells are preparing to recognize and fight disease.

If side effects from a vaccine are found to be serious during testing, the vaccine will not be approved.

Vaccines need the green light before approval

Many teams of doctors and experts review the information gathered during vaccine testing. After doing this, they recommend whether or not a particular vaccine should be approved for public use.

Sometimes people make the mistake of thinking that having mild vaccine side effects 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.

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 family’s vaccines

Your experience is important

After a vaccine is approved, everyday people who got the vaccine can share how it made them feel, using the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System at www.VAERS.hhs.gov. This helps identify any risks quickly.

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 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.



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.

