Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
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Vaccines Home
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? (/web/20141010112625/https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/why.htm)
  Learn how getting vaccinated can protect your grandchildren, prevent epidemics, and eliminate diseases and their serious consequences.
- Brief overview of adult (/web/20141010112625/https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/vpd.html) and childhood (/web/20141010112625/https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/child-vpd.htm) 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 (/web/20141010112625/https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/10-shouldknow.htm)
  Includes how many vaccine doses your child needs, the importance of keeping records, side effects, etc.
- How immunity works: types of immunity (/web/20141010112625/https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/immunity-types.htm)
  Learn the difference between the two basic types of immunity: active and passive.
- Common questions (/web/20141010112625/https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/common-faqs.htm)
  Find answers to common questions about immunization.
- What would happen if we stopped vaccinations? (/web/20141010112625/https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/whatifstop.htm)
  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 (/web/20141010112625/https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/life-cycle.htm)
  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.

- Vaccine availability timeline (https://web.archive.org/web/20141010112625/http://www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-schedule/vaccine-availability-timeline.html) (https://web.archive.org/web/20141010100431/http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html)
  Dates when vaccines first became available.

  See also: Vaccines: The Basics (/web/20141010112625/https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/vpd-vac-basics.htm)

Related Information and Materials

- The Parents' Guide to Childhood Immunizations (/web/20141010112625/https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/parents-guide/default.htm) 68-page booklet introducing parents to all childhood diseases and the vaccines that can protect children from them
- The Vaccines for Children Program (https://web.archive.org/web/20141010112625/http://www.cdc.gov/Features/VFCprogram/)
  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 (/web/20141010112625/https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/vpd-vac-basics.htm)
- Vaccines and Your Child's Immune System (/web/20141010112625/https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/vaccine-decision/immune-system.html)
- Ensuring Vaccine Safety (/web/20141010112625/https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/vaccine-decision/safety.html)
- Ingredients of Vaccines (/web/20141010112625/https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/additives.htm)

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