



Vaccines and Autism

Let's separate fact from fiction!



The Arizona Autism Coalition, in partnership with The American Academy of Pediatrics, Arizona Chapter, presents a scientific approach to childhood vaccines. Let's forget the fear and learn the facts!

Q: What are vaccines?

A: Vaccines prevent many serious diseases. By getting vaccinated, the individual child receives protection from these diseases. Vaccines also help to protect all the rest of us by slowing or stopping disease outbreaks. Getting as many people vaccinated is especially important to protect children who cannot be vaccinated because they are too young, too sick, or do not respond to vaccines.

Q: Why are vaccines necessary?

A: Vaccinations have been one of society's greatest health care achievements. Widespread use of vaccines has led to the reduction or disappearance of once common and sometimes fatal childhood diseases. However, the viruses and bacteria that cause vaccine-preventable disease still exist, especially in other parts of the world. These diseases can still spread to people in the U.S. who are not protected by vaccines.

Q: Who can administer vaccines?

A: Vaccines are administered by a trained medical professional, such as a physician, physician's assistant, medical assistant, or nurse. Certain vaccines can also be given by a pharmacist.

Q: Is there a link between vaccinations and autism?

A: Research fails to show any link. The causes of autism are not known for certain. Most experts agree that autism is a condition that begins before birth. For example, studies of people with autism have identified abnormalities in their brain structures that were present while they were still in the womb. The current theory favored by many experts is that autism is a genetically based disorder.

Q: Do physicians make money from pharmaceutical or insurance companies for administering vaccines to children?

A: Although physicians are reimbursed for giving vaccines, doctors who administer vaccines often lose money due to the low reimbursement rates. Many pediatricians have stopped administering vaccines due to losing money from giving vaccines.

Q: Are vaccines 100% effective all the time?

A: No vaccine gives 100% protection. That is why it is important for everyone to get vaccinated, if possible. If enough people are vaccinated, the disease never gets a chance to spread. If enough people decide not to get vaccinated, it is easier for the infections to spread, so that everyone is at a higher risk of getting a vaccine-preventable disease, even those who are vaccinated.

Q: Why has there been an increase in the vaccine schedule?

A: We have been fortunate to have more and more vaccines that protect against life-threatening infections. Vaccines are the best way to prevent infectious diseases. Children are given vaccines at young ages because they are susceptible to these diseases from birth.

Q: Is there research to demonstrate a causal link between vaccines and autism?

A: While there are many studies to investigate a link between vaccines and autism, a direct causal relationship has not been firmly established. Many large scale epidemiologic studies do not show evidence for causality or even a significant association and some show just the opposite. Researchers have investigated the possible link to vaccines with and without thimerisol, to the MMR vaccine specifically and all vaccines together. In very rare cases, some individuals may have an underlying condition that may produce negative health consequences when vaccines are introduced. Parents are encouraged to discuss these conditions with their child's pediatrician so they can fully understand the risks. For more information about immunizations, access the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines>.

Q: Due to a payment to a child from the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP), did the Federal Government concede that autism and vaccinations are linked?

A: No. Although Hannah Poling, a child born with mitochondrial disorder, was awarded compensation due to vaccine injury, her autism symptoms appeared prior to vaccination.

Q: Does the Arizona Autism Coalition benefit monetarily in any way by advocating for childhood and adult vaccination?

A: No. The Arizona Autism Coalition adheres to the best medical practices and is committed to the sharing of resources and information with the public.

Q: If I have questions about vaccinations, who can I contact to learn more?

A: You can discuss any and all of your concerns with your child's pediatrician, or visit the [Arizona Autism Coalition](http://www.arizonaautismcoalition.org) and American Academy of Pediatrics [website](http://www.aap.org) to learn more.