

Measles, mumps, flu and more: Should you vaccinate your child?



If you ask pediatricians, family physicians, internists, infectious disease physicians and allergists, there's no debate: vaccinate.

"There isn't a single vaccine on the market that hasn't been cleared by the Food and Drug Administration," says Bishara Freij, M.D., section head of Pediatric Infectious Disease at Beaumont Children's Hospital. "Vaccinating children in the United States is a safe and effective way to prevent many communicable diseases that can be deadly."

MYTH: There's mercury, or thimerosal, in vaccines.

REALITY: There hasn't been mercury or thimerosal, which is a preservative, in pediatric vaccines in more than 10 years. "The concern was always with the developing brain and the effects of mercury," explains Dr. Freij. "Researchers measured mercury levels before and after vaccination, and found there was nothing to note." Only multi-vial doses for adults contain minute amounts of thimerosal.

MYTH: Vaccines can cause autism.

REALITY: "This has been studied and researched in many countries because parents expressed concern," says Dr. Freij. "There is no increased risk for autism. There's no science to support a link. It's just an unfortunate coincidence that children are at the height of their vaccination schedule around the same time autism signals start showing."

MYTH: Vaccines will poison your child.

REALITY: "My son got every vaccine that was available," shares Dr. Freij. "Many of the diseases children are vaccinated against are under control now. The benefits of vaccination outweigh any perceived risk of poisoning."

MYTH: People die from being vaccinated.

REALITY: Death from vaccinations is extraordinarily rare, according to Dr. Freij. "If a child dies from a vaccine, it's usually because they were immune compromised and didn't know it, or they developed anaphylactic shock, which is very rare." Major complications or even death from a vaccine-preventable disease is real.

MYTH: Any kind of egg allergy makes it unsafe for some children to be vaccinated.

REALITY: According to Devang Doshi, M.D., section head of Pediatric Allergy and Immunology at Beaumont Children's Hospital, eggs are only a concern with two vaccines in the United States: influenza and MMR (measles, mumps and rubella). "The amount of egg protein in these vaccinations is so miniscule, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology still recommend giving them to children with egg allergies," Dr. Doshi says. "The risk of not vaccinating due to an egg allergy is not worth the risk of a potential reaction and definitely not worth getting a life-threatening infection." For influenza, if truly concerned, two egg-free vaccines exist.



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