

Keeping Kids Well: Common Questions about Vaccines for Patients and Families

Resources

- [Center for Disease Control Immunization Schedule Birth-18](#)
- [Center for Disease Control Immunization Catch-Up Schedule for those that start late or are more than a month behind](#)

Why does my child need vaccines?

- Vaccinations are shots given to your child to protect them from disease. It trains the body's immune system so that it can fight a disease it has not come into contact with before.

I don't know anyone who has these diseases. Why does our child need these vaccines?

- That is good to hear and exactly the reason to keep getting the recommended vaccines. While some of the vaccine preventable diseases occur rarely or never, there are many that still exist. In fact, even in North Carolina there was a recent outbreak of mumps. Whooping cough (pertussis) and the flu can be prevented with a vaccine, but can still occur.

Because of the COVID virus, I was afraid to take my child to the doctor's office for vaccines and so we are behind schedule. What should I do?

- Many children have missed their shots (vaccines) due to COVID and staying home, but the doctor's office will know how to bring your child up to date. Please make an appointment as soon as possible to reduce the chances of your child getting sick.

What should I ask when I call to make an appointment to catch up on vaccines?

- When you call the doctor's office, ask about ways they safely offer vaccines during this time. Doctors' offices are taking extra steps to make sure this process can happen safely during the COVID-19 outbreak, including:
 - Scheduling appointments or visits during different times of the day.
 - Asking patients to remain outside until it's time for their appointment to reduce the number of people in waiting rooms.
 - Offering visits in different locations.

- Also ask if your child is due for a well child visit so it can be done at the same visit as vaccines.

Are there better ways we can protect our newborns and infants?

- No. Breastfeeding has many benefits and may temporarily prevent certain illnesses, however, vaccines are the best way to protect child from vaccine preventable diseases.
- Vitamins, or other treatments do not prevent the illnesses that are targeted by vaccines.

What are the side effects?

- Most side effects from vaccines are minor, such as soreness where the shot was given or a low-grade fever. These side effects do not last long and are treatable. Serious reactions are very rare. *Credit: [Immunization Action Coalition](#).*

Are there any new requirements for vaccinations?

- Meningitis Vaccine for Adolescents- Now Required for Entering 12th Grade.
- Beginning August 1, 2020, all students entering the 12th grade in North Carolina must have a second, booster dose of meningitis (meningococcal conjugant) vaccine. This will improve protection from the dangerous and often deadly disease.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Questions

Why does my child need the HPV Vaccine NOW?

- HPV vaccine is important because it prevents infections that can cause cancer. That's why we need to start the shot series today. HPV is a very common infection in women and men that can cause cancer. Starting the vaccine series today will help protect your child from the cancers and diseases caused by HPV.
- Vaccines protect your child before they are exposed to a disease. That's why we give the HPV vaccine earlier rather than later, to protect them long before they are ever exposed. Also, if your child gets the shot now, they will only need two doses. If you wait until your child is older, he/she may end up needing three shots.

What diseases are caused by HPV?

- Some HPV infections can cause cancer—like cancer of the cervix or in the back of the throat—but we can protect your child from these cancers in the future by getting the first HPV shot today.

I'm worried my child will think that getting this vaccine makes it OK to have sex.

- Studies tell us that getting HPV vaccine doesn't make kids more likely to start having sex. I made sure my child (or grandchild, etc.) got an HPV vaccine, and I recommend we give your child their first HPV shot today.

Why do boys need the HPV vaccine?

- HPV vaccination can help prevent future infections that can lead to cancers of the penis, anus, and back of the throat in men.

Is the HPV vaccine safe?

- Yes, HPV vaccination is very safe. Like any medicine, vaccines can cause side effects, including pain, swelling, or redness where the shot was given. That's normal for HPV vaccines too and should go away in a day or two. Sometimes kids faint after they get shots and they could be injured if they fall from fainting. We'll have your child stay seated after the shot to help protect them.

Credit: National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention , National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases , National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion