



Do immunizations cause autism?

Studies show that there is **no** link between the MMR vaccine or thimerosal and autism. Reassurance that you understand that their infant's health is their top priority and yours is important. Putting children at risk of vaccine-preventable diseases without scientific evidence of a link between immunizations and autism is a risk you are not willing to take.

"People who say the MMR vaccine causes autism must be on to something. Right?"

"Autism is a complicated condition for many families and people want answers- including me. But well designed and conducted studies that I can share with you show that MMR vaccine is not a cause of autism. "

Are immunizations more dangerous for infants than the diseases that they prevent?

Today, parents may not have seen a case of a vaccine-preventable disease so they may wonder if immunizations are really necessary. They may believe that the risks of immunizing infants are more dangerous than protecting them with immunizations.

"What are all these immunizations for? Are they really necessary?"

"I know you didn't get all these immunizations when you were a baby. Neither did I. But we were both at risk of serious diseases like measles and meningitis. Today, we're lucky to be able to protect children from 14 serious diseases with immunizations."

Why does my child need all these immunizations at such a young age? Is it safer to delay some shots?

The childhood vaccine schedule is designed to provide protection at the earliest possible time against serious diseases that may affect vulnerable infants. There is no evidence that getting more than one vaccine at the same time will harm a child.

"I'm not really comfortable with my 2-month old getting so many immunizations at once."

"There's no proven danger in getting all the recommended 2-month immunizations today. Any time you delay a vaccine you leave your baby vulnerable to disease. It's really best to stay on schedule. But if you're very uncomfortable, we can give some immunizations today and schedule you to come back in two weeks for the rest. What is your biggest concern?"

What are the side effects and risks of immunizations?

It is reasonable for parents to be concerned about the possible reactions or side effects of immunizations. There is no evidence that immunizations are linked to chronic diseases such as autism, asthma, or diabetes. To reinforce how rare serious side effects are, you should share your own experience about the safety and rareness of serious side effects. Remind parents to watch for possible side effects like redness where a shot was given or fussiness after a vaccination and provide information on how to treat them.

"I'm worried about the side effects of immunizations. I don't want my child to get any shots today."

"I'll worry if your child doesn't get immunizations today, because the diseases can be very dangerous. Most of them, including pertussis and measles, are still infecting children in the U.S. We can look at the Vaccine Factsheets together and talk about how rare serious vaccine side effects are."

"You don't really know if immunizations cause any long-term effects."

"We have years of experience with immunizations and no reason to believe that they cause long-term harm. I understand your concern, but I truly believe that the risk of disease is greater than any risks posed by immunizations. Immunizations will get your baby off to a great start for a long healthy life."

Tips for having conversations with patients about immunizations:

Given everything in the media—who wouldn't be confused about the safety of immunizations! Research shows that parents look to their medical providers for trusted information. A successful discussion about immunizations involves a two-way conversation, with both parties sharing information and asking questions. Take advantage of early opportunities such as the prenatal, newborn, 1-week, and 1 month visits to initiate a dialogue about immunizations. This gives parents time to read and digest reputable vaccine information and ask questions before the first and all future immunizations.

