

# Immunizations

As we move into fall, many children will be going to school or child care, either as first timers or established veterans. This is the perfect time to make sure that your child's immunizations are up to date and meet the requirements of your child's school or child care center.

Immunizations help to protect children and adults from illness. When a person is immunized, a weakened version of the disease germs is injected into the body, which makes antibodies to defend against these germs. Since the injected germs are weakened, the body easily gets rid of them. Some of the antibodies stay in the body so that if you are ever infected with the germ again, your body is prepared to fight it off because it is immune to a disease.

Immunizations have helped to make some of the diseases they protect against very uncommon. Some diseases have never disappeared completely. They may be brought here from people who travel to other parts of the world or have come back because fewer people are getting the immunized against them. These diseases can be very serious and, even if they are uncommon, they are worth protecting against.

Immunizations are safe and effective and are tested very carefully before they are put into use. Once in use, they are constantly monitored to assure that they are still safe. Immunizations can cause side effects, the most common of which are minor reactions like redness or swelling at the place where the shot was given. Sometimes they may even cause a mild fever. If you think your child is having a more serious reaction to an immunization, contact your health care provider.

Children start getting immunizations as infants and will continue to need immunizations throughout their school years. There are also immunizations for adults which you should discuss with your health care provider to figure out which immunizations are right for your family.

One immunization that is becoming especially important right now for children and adults is the immunization to protect against pertussis also known as whooping cough. Pertussis is a serious disease that causes a bad cough and is especially dangerous for infants and young children. California is currently experiencing an outbreak of pertussis but, fortunately, there is an immunization in place to protect against pertussis. Children usually receive a series of shots starting when they are infants and boosters are needed later in childhood. Adults should also get a booster if they haven't already. As with the other vaccines, your health care provider can help you decide if you or your child needs a pertussis immunization.

A person who is immunized protects themselves and everyone around them. Immunizations are an important step we can take to keep ourselves and our children healthy.

Resources and references:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/>

(This article is not meant to be a substitute for medical advice or care. Please seek medical care from your own health care provider.)