

Vaccine Benefits: Why get vaccinated?

Your children's first vaccines protect them from 8 serious diseases, caused by viruses and bacteria. These diseases have injured and killed many children (and adults) over the years. Polio paralyzed about 37,000 people and killed about 1,700 each year in the 1950s before there was a vaccine. In the 1980s, Hib disease was the leading cause of bacterial meningitis in children under 5 years of age. About 15,000 people a year died from diphtheria before there was a vaccine. Most children have had at least one rotavirus infection by their 5th birthday.

None of these diseases has completely disappeared. Without vaccination, they will come back. This has happened in other parts of the world.

8 Diseases Prevented by Childhood Vaccines

DIPHTHERIA

Bacteria

You can get it from contact with an infected person.

Signs and symptoms include a thick covering in the back of the throat that can make it hard to breathe.

It can lead to breathing problems, heart failure, and death.

TETANUS (Lockjaw)

Bacteria

You can get it from a cut or wound. It does not spread from person to person.

Signs and symptoms include painful tightening of the muscles, usually all over the body.

It can lead to stiffness of the jaw, so the victim can't open his mouth or swallow. It leads to death in about 1 case out of 5.

PERTUSSIS (Whooping Cough)

Bacteria

You can get it from contact with an infected person.

Signs and symptoms include violent coughing spells that can make it hard for an infant to eat, drink, or breathe. These spells can last for weeks.

It can lead to pneumonia, seizures (jerking and staring spells), brain damage, and death.

HIB (*Haemophilus influenzae* type b)

Bacteria

You can get it from contact with an infected person.

Signs and symptoms. There may be no signs or symptoms in mild cases.

It can lead to meningitis (infection of the brain and spinal cord coverings); pneumonia; infections of the blood, joints, bones, and covering of the heart; brain damage; deafness; and death.

HEPATITIS B

Virus

You can get it from contact with blood or body fluids of an infected person. Babies can get it at birth if the mother is infected, or through a cut or wound. Adults can get it from unprotected sex, sharing needles, or other exposures to blood.

Signs and symptoms include tiredness, diarrhea and vomiting, jaundice (yellow skin or eyes), and pain in muscles, joints and stomach.

It can lead to liver damage, liver cancer, and death.

POLIO

Virus

You can get it from close contact with an infected person. It enters the body through the mouth.

Signs and symptoms can include a cold-like illness, or there may be no signs or symptoms at all.

It can lead to paralysis (can't move arm or leg), or death (by paralyzing breathing muscles).

PNEUMOCOCCAL

Bacteria

You can get it from contact with an infected person.

Signs and symptoms include fever, chills, cough, and chest pain.

It can lead to meningitis (infection of the brain and spinal cord coverings), blood infections, ear infections, pneumonia, deafness, brain damage, and death.

ROTAVIRUS

Virus

You can get it from contact with other children who are infected.

Signs and symptoms include severe diarrhea, vomiting and fever.

It can lead to dehydration, hospitalization (up to about 70,000 a year), and death.

How Vaccines Work

Immunity from Disease: When a child gets sick with one of these diseases, her immune system produces immunity, which keeps her from getting the same disease again. But getting sick is unpleasant, and can be dangerous.

Immunity from Vaccines: Vaccines are made with the same bacteria or viruses that cause a disease, but they have been weakened or killed to make them safe. A child's immune system responds to a vaccine the same way it would if the child had the disease. This means he will develop immunity without having to get sick first.