



Vaccines offer one of the safest ways to protect young children from preventable and potentially fatal diseases. However, some parents choose not to vaccinate their children because of misinformation about the need for and safety of vaccines.

The fact is: Vaccinations are important, effective, and safe. Each year, vaccines prevent a potential 14 million infections and 33,000 deaths in the United States. Here are some important facts about why vaccinations are critical.

# Childhood Vaccines: FACT & FICTION

**Fiction:** Vaccines are not safe.

**Fact:** Study after study has shown the vaccines your child receives are safe. Before a vaccine can be given, it must be researched and tested to the highest level of safety. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has final responsibility for approval. Even after a vaccine is approved, it continues to be studied.

**Fiction:** Vaccines are not as important anymore in United States.

**Fact:** Though not common in the United States, measles, mumps, pertussis (whooping cough), and even polio and diphtheria are still common in other countries. These contagious diseases can be just one plane ride away. In fact, San Diego had a measles outbreak in 2008. An unvaccinated child returned from a trip to Switzerland with the measles and went on to infect other unvaccinated children. This outbreak resulted in 135 cases of the measles, spread across several states, and caused some hospitalizations. Vaccinating children in the United States can keep infections and diseases from reappearing or becoming epidemics.

**Fiction:** You do not need a vaccination for harmless diseases like chickenpox.

**Fact:** Chickenpox is a highly contagious disease that causes more than itchy bumps. Chickenpox can cause skin lesions and dehydration and can lead to pneumonia, brain damage, and death. One in 10 unvaccinated children who get chickenpox will have complications severe enough to visit their doctor. Before the chickenpox vaccine became available in 1995, more than 100 children died every year in the United States from this “harmless” disease.

**Fiction:** Vaccines cause harmful side effects, illnesses, and even deaths.

**Fact:** As with medicine, some children may experience vaccine side effects. Most side effects are minor and temporary, such as a sore arm or fever. Choosing not to vaccinate your child is a much riskier choice.

**Fiction:** It is not safe for young children to get multiple shots at one time.

**Fact:** Studies have shown that infants can respond to multiple vaccines, which play an important role in helping their immune system avoid disease. Today’s vaccines are purer and safer than vaccines of the past. The bacteria children fight daily in their bodies and the environment are far greater than those in vaccines.

**Fiction:** Delaying and spacing out vaccines will be better for my baby’s immune system.

**Fact:** Delaying vaccines increases the time children are more vulnerable to common and potentially deadly diseases, such as whooping cough and pneumococcus. Spacing out shots may upset your child unnecessarily. Researchers have found children have the same stress whether they have one or more shots at a visit. So more doctor visits can mean more stress.

**Fiction:** Thimerosal causes autism.

**Fact:** In studies around the world, no conclusive evidence has shown that any vaccine increases the risk of developing autism or any other behavior disorder. Nonetheless, with the exception of some flu vaccines, none of the childhood vaccines used in the United States contain thimerosal — a mercury-based preservative.



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Physicians Caring for Texans

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