

We believe that immunizing your children is among the most important things you and we can do for them. Immunizations are considered one of the most significant medical advances of the last century. Immunizations have truly become a “victim of their own success.” People of child-bearing age have no recollection of the severe and dreaded consequences, including death, of these once common illnesses. Of the currently administered immunizations for vaccine-preventable illnesses, none of the diseases have been eradicated. Many of these diseases are just a short plane, or even car ride, away. Even polio is prevalent in countries of Africa and Asia. This is a global world, where our children will be traveling extensively and people from other countries travel here commonly. The only reason that some parents can refuse vaccination, is because the vast majority of parents DO vaccinate appropriately. This provides some protection to unimmunized individuals due to lower likelihood of being exposed to these diseases. It has consistently been seen that when immunization rates are reduced, the incidence of these diseases quickly increases, leading to illness and death from these preventable diseases.

Certain diseases, such as pertussis (whooping cough) are often prevalent in the community, due to partial, and decreasing immunity over time after receiving the immunizations. Pertussis is often carried in the nasal passageways of healthy children and adults. For this reason, school-aged children and adults are now recommended or required to get booster doses of pertussis-containing vaccines. This reduces the rate of children and adults who carry this bacteria. Being a carrier of pertussis is generally of little consequence to people outside of the newborn/infant period. However, children and adults who carry pertussis may spread it to an infant who is not yet old enough to be immunized or has not yet received enough doses to be adequately protected. Pertussis can cause life-threatening disease in infants. It is a very real risk to have newborns and infants exposed to unimmunized or under-immunized children and adults, in public and even in our office waiting rooms.

There are many concerns that parents have about immunization safety. The initial study that suggested a link between autism and immunizations, was found to be fraudulently done and retracted by the journal that printed it and resulted in the loss of medical license to the physician who was the lead author. Despite the rigorous, scientific studies and years of experience, some people have ongoing fears. Many people have a natural “push-back” when told that they are required to do something. Without question, the safety of immunizations has been established. Links to autism have been categorically disproven in valid, scientifically rigorous studies. Concerns about preservatives are not scientifically founded and felt, in fact, to be of no medical concern. Fears of overwhelming an infant’s immune system are not immunologically accurate, as it is understood that babies can face substantially more immunologic challenges than vaccinations present.

A question patients sometimes ask us when unsure of how to proceed with a medical treatment, is “Would you do this for your own child?” The answer with immunizations is an emphatic YES. In fact, we consider it one of the most important things we can do for their future health and truly a parental obligation.

Scientifically valid websites: <http://www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/home.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/safety/default.htm>