

What you need to know about infant immunization

Written by The Minnesota Department of Health, Immunization Program
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Vaccines are a very important part of protecting your children and yourself from some serious diseases. Anyone who has seen a person die or get very sick from a disease that could be prevented by a vaccine knows how important they are.

Immunizing your child is one of the most loving things you can do. Shots work. Shots are safe. They have very few side effects. The benefits far outweigh any risks.

Immunization starts before a baby is born when the mom gets shots to prevent whooping cough (pertussis) and flu when she is pregnant. These vaccines help keep the mom and baby from getting sick. It is important for dads, grandparents, brothers, sisters, and anyone else that will be spending time with your baby to get their whooping cough and flu vaccines too. This protects the newborn baby until they get their own vaccinations.

Be sure to get shots at the right ages. Kids need most of their shots by 2 years of age. Shots work best at these ages, but if your child is behind, you can get them caught up. Shots for young children are usually given at:

- Birth
- 2 months
- 4 months
- 6 months
- 12-23 months
- 4-6 years

Vaccination protects against these diseases:

- Hepatitis B
- Diphtheria
- Tetanus
- Pertussis (whooping cough)
- Hib meningitis
- Pneumococcal meningitis
- Polio
- Rotavirus
- Influenza
- Measles
- Mumps
- Rubella
- Varicella (chickenpox)
- Hepatitis A

We don't see some of these diseases very often anymore. That is because vaccines work. Vaccinations help keep children healthy so disease does not spread in our communities.

It is okay for a baby to receive several shots at the same time. It helps the immune system to grow stronger. Most of the time, it is okay to go ahead with vaccination even if your child has a

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cold, earache, diarrhea, or is on antibiotics.

Remember to carry a shot record card for each child. You will need them for the doctor, child care, Head Start, school, camp, and even college.

Sometimes parents are worried about how much shots cost. Free or low cost shots are available for eligible children in Minnesota through the Minnesota Vaccines for Children program. Find out if your child can get free or low cost shots by going to this website: www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/immunize/howpay.html

If you are looking for more information about the diseases and the vaccines that prevent them, check out the Vaccine Information Sheets. They are available in many languages. The website is: www.immunize.org/VIS .