

Vaccines: A Safe Bet For You And Your Family

(NAPSA)—Vaccines play an important role in keeping people of all ages healthy, and are the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones from potentially life-threatening infectious diseases.

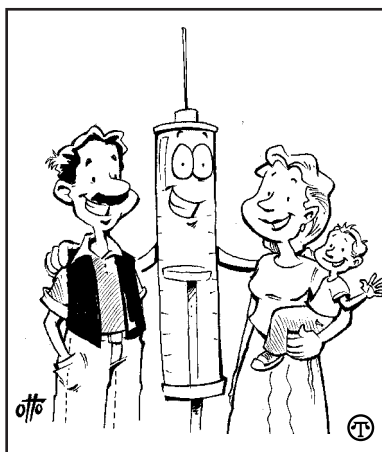
“Routine vaccination is the most effective tool available to help ensure infectious diseases do not threaten our health,” said David Neumann, PhD, Director of the National Partnership for Immunization (NPI). “Thanks to vaccines, we no longer see many diseases that once were a frightening fact of daily life. Many Americans, including physicians and parents, have never seen illnesses like polio, measles and mumps, which we successfully fought with immunization.”

For example, take the disease pertussis, also known as whooping cough. Before the pertussis vaccine was introduced, there were more than 200,000 cases of whooping cough with up to 1,000 pertussis-related deaths each year. Last year, thanks to the vaccine, fewer than 7,000 cases were diagnosed.

Vaccines are Safe

You may have seen headlines questioning vaccine safety. Yet, what many people do not realize is that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has strict standards for evaluating the safety of a vaccine before it can be approved for licensure. The FDA requires that every vaccine pass through three phases of clinical (human) trials that can last more than 10 years and involve thousands of participants. Clinical trials are carefully designed to make sure each vaccine meets specific safety standards required for licensure.

Most side effects of vaccines are minor and temporary, like a sore arm at the site of injection. Serious events



Routine vaccination has helped to protect millions of people from diseases like polio, measles and mumps which were once an ever-present threat to daily life.

are very rare. Even after a vaccine is in use, it continues to be closely monitored by the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) using a national system, called the Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System (VAERS). VAERS reports are closely monitored to detect any new or unusual increases in vaccine-related reactions. These reports also help identify pre-existing conditions that may contraindicate additional vaccine doses, and identify specific vaccine lots associated with adverse reactions. In addition to the national reporting system, phase four studies—multi-year studies involving many thousands of participants—continue to monitor a vaccine’s safety.

Vaccines are Good Public Health

Immunization not only benefits the people who are vaccinated, it also helps reduce the spread of disease to persons who have *not* been immunized.

Let’s use the pertussis vaccine again as an example. As with all vaccines, the pertussis vaccine is not 100 percent effective. Yet, 71 percent of all children who complete the full vaccination series are protected against the disease. The children who are protected by the vaccine have less disease, thus limiting the exposure of unprotected children and reducing the overall spread of the disease.

In recent years, there have been a number of community-wide pertussis outbreaks reported in the U.S. They have been attributed to a variety of factors, including children not getting the complete vaccine series recommended by medical experts. In Massachusetts, four outbreaks during the 1980s were attributed to lack of vaccination among children whose parents had philosophical or religious exemptions to vaccination.

Dr. Neumann warns that without mass immunization, diseases like pertussis could return in full force.

Find Out More

Get the facts about immunization and vaccine safety.

Visit the National Partnership for Immunization’s website at www.partnersforimmunization.org. This comprehensive website provides information about vaccination for children and adults, including a chart that explains immunization recommendations for all ages.

The National Partnership for Immunization (NPI), a joint partnership of the National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition (HMHB) and National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID), was formed to increase awareness of the importance of infant, child, adolescent and adult immunization through partnerships with public and private organizations.