

Common questions about vaccines



Vaccinations are a powerful tool to prevent infections, hospitalization, and death.

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines are made up of small parts of bacteria or virus. **These do not give you the infection. They teach your immune system to create antibodies**, which help your body fight the infection if you are exposed to it at a later time.

How effective are vaccines?

Vaccines can **cut the risk of death, hospitalization, and feeling sick**. Some are over 90% effective at preventing serious illness, while others, like the flu vaccine, vary from year to year.

How safe are vaccines?

For most people, vaccines are incredibly safe. There may be pain at the site where the shot was given. Some vaccines also cause muscle aches, tiredness, and headaches. Serious side effects are very rare (less than one per 1 million given).

I am healthy. Why do I need to get vaccinated?

Getting vaccinated lowers your risk for getting sick and can also **help prevent you from getting others sick**. Young children, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems are more likely to have a serious illness from infections, even if a healthy adult would not.

For more about vaccine benefits, risks, and other questions, go to: cdc.gov/vaccines



Balanced information for better care

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