



# Take a shot for good health

## Immunizations aren't just for kids

Bike helmets. Vegetables. Vaccines. If you have kids, chances are you've fought these battles. But you know it's worth it to protect your kids' health.

But do you take a hard line when it comes to your health, as well? Lots of adults aren't up to date on their vaccines (immunizations). Shots aren't just for kids. They're also important for adults because:<sup>1</sup>

- Immunity can fade over time, which could expose you to diseases that are more severe for adults than for kids.
- Newer vaccines can help protect against things like chicken pox and the virus that causes cervical cancer.
- You may have missed some of your shots when you were a kid.

The good news is that it isn't too late to catch up. Not only will you protect yourself and your family, but you could also help to stop the spread of illness worldwide. And that's a battle worth fighting.

### How do vaccines work?

When you're sick, your body's immune system kicks in to fight off germs. Plus the immune system has a memory. It recalls what you've been exposed to before and helps protect you the next time around. Without this protection, even the common cold could be deadly.

But some germs are so strong that they can overwhelm the immune system. That's where vaccines come into play. Because the germs in vaccines have been weakened or killed, they don't cause an illness. But they do cause your body to build up immunity. That helps you fight off the germs better.<sup>2</sup>

Before we had vaccines, the only way to become immune to an illness was to get the illness. That could be serious — or even deadly. Being vaccinated is a way to build up immunity with less risk.<sup>2</sup>

## Why get vaccines?

If you were born in the past 50 years, you probably don't worry about polio, measles and whooping cough. At one time these diseases were widespread – and catching them caused paralysis, birth defects and even death. Because of vaccines, these illnesses are no longer common. But that's no reason to think vaccines aren't needed anymore.

When too few people get immunized, an illness can still affect large numbers of people. Each year as many as 60,000 adults in the U.S. die from the flu, tetanus and pneumonia –diseases that could have been avoided with vaccines.<sup>3</sup> And those illnesses that we almost got rid of decades ago can come back. In 1989, the U.S. had a measles outbreak because of low vaccination rates. More than 55,000 people got measles, and 136 died.<sup>4</sup>

## Are vaccines safe?

Some reports have suggested a link between vaccines and serious health problems. These reports have not been confirmed. But still, some parents worry about vaccines. They question whether the benefits of getting a vaccine outweigh the risks of getting an illness – especially if they think their kid's chances of getting that illness are low.

All medicines carry the risk of side effects, and vaccines are no exception. As with all drugs, no vaccine is 100 percent effective or safe. However, vaccines go through lots of testing, and they're licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration before they're used in this country.<sup>5</sup> For details about safety and testing, go to [cdc.gov/vaccines](http://cdc.gov/vaccines).

**Visit [anthem.com](http://anthem.com) for more ways to get healthy – and stay healthy.**

### Certain factual or statistical information was derived from the following sources:

- 1 Centers for Disease Control, "Immunization Recommendations, United States - 2011," [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov), updated June 2011, accessed November 2011.
- 2 National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, "What Is a Vaccine?," [niaid.nih.gov](http://niaid.nih.gov), updated August 2008, accessed November 2011; National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, "How Vaccines Work," [niaid.nih.gov](http://niaid.nih.gov), updated April 2011, accessed November 2011.
- 3 National Network for Immunization Information, "Immunization Issues: Adult Immunization," [immunizationinfo.org](http://immunizationinfo.org), updated January 2008, accessed November 2011.
- 4 National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, "Vaccine Benefits," [niaid.nih.gov](http://niaid.nih.gov), updated May 2010, accessed November 2011.
- 5 Centers for Disease Control, "Vaccine Safety: What You Should Know," [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov), updated August 2010, accessed November 2011.



## Resources

To find out more, visit the Centers for Disease Control's website at [cdc.gov/vaccines](http://cdc.gov/vaccines). You can see immunization schedules, answers to common questions and more. Or you can call the CDC Information Contact Center.

English and Español:

**800-CDC-INFO**

(800-232-4636)

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**888-232-6348**