

5 Things You Should Know About...

Vaccines



- 1. Vaccines do not cause autism.** The 1998 study by Andrew Wakefield that suggested a link has been retracted and thoroughly debunked by numerous researchers. In fact, a recent study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* observed more than 95,000 children and found that the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine does not increase the risk of autism (ASD). The researchers paid particular attention to children who had an older sibling with autism (which increases the likelihood a younger sibling will have autism), and found “no evidence that receipt of either 1 or 2 doses of MMR vaccination was associated with an increased risk of ASD.”
- 2. Vaccination of U.S. children in the past 20 years will prevent 732,000 deaths, 21 million hospitalizations, and 322 million illnesses over the course of their lifetimes, according to a CDC report.** Vaccines have had a profound effect on disease rates. For instance, prior to the measles vaccination’s availability in 1963, more than 500,000 Americans were infected every year. The report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also estimates that the increase in vaccination rates over the past two decades has also saved \$295 billion in direct costs like medical expenses.
- 3. Vaccinations can cause side effects, but serious side effects are very rare. The benefits of vaccinations far outweigh the possible risks.** A recent 12-year study published in the journal *Pediatrics* of two types of measles vaccines “found that seven main adverse outcomes were unlikely after either vaccine.” Though serious side effects are possible, they are extremely rare—one in millions—and the CDC stresses that most vaccine side effects are minor and go away within a few days.
- 4. Childhood vaccinations (with the exception of some flu vaccines) do not contain mercury.** One of the most persistent myths is that vaccinations given to children contain mercury. However, thimerosal—a mercury-containing compound used in trace amounts as a vaccine preservative—has been phased out of all vaccinations recommended for children 6 and under except for certain flu shots. Extensive research from the Institute of Medicine concludes that there is no link between thimerosal in vaccines and autism.
- 5. Declining vaccination rates have sparked outbreaks of preventable diseases.** States that allow parents to easily opt out of childhood vaccinations have contributed to vaccination rates as low as 66 percent in some states. With declining immunity, outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases and whooping cough are alarmingly common. In 2014, the U.S. reported its highest number of measles cases in two decades.