



Childhood Immunizations

Vaccines have reduced preventable disease such as polio, rubella, measles, diphtheria, and H. influenzae by 99%. They are one of the most effective forms of medical intervention in modern times.

Vaccines not only protect the child being immunized, but contribute to the overall protection of other (non-immunized) individuals by reducing their exposure to infectious diseases. Prior to the availability of the polio vaccines, between 13,000 and 20,000 cases of paralytic poliomyelitis were reported each year in the United States. Polio immunization programs have completely eliminated paralytic polio in the U.S. and the entire Western Hemisphere.

Prior to the availability of Haemophilus influenzae Type B (Hib) vaccine, Hib was the most common cause of bacterial meningitis in children, responsible for killing 600 children each year and causing deafness, seizures, and mental retardation in many survivors. Since the vaccine's development and implementation, the incidence of Hib has declined by 99%. Prior to the availability of measles vaccines, approximately 3-4 million cases of measles were reported each year in the U.S.

Widespread use of measles vaccine has led to a greater than 98% reduction in measles. Adverse reactions to vaccines (generally mild) have occurred in less than 1% of all children immunized; the benefit of vaccines in lives saved and disease prevented far outweighs the risks. Because epidemics of infectious diseases can sweep the nation when immunizations are not routinely administered, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago supports:

- The implementation of standards for pediatric immunizations endorsed by the National Vaccine Advisory Committee.
- Mandated immunizations with exemptions only for medical necessity as determined by a physician or other qualified health provider or unless vaccination violates a well-established religious belief.
- Access to immunizations for all children.
- The provision of easily understood information about immunizations for parents related to the risk/benefit of immunizations.
- Practitioner adherence to the recording and reporting requirements of the National Vaccine Act.