

# Parents Page

**AUGUST 2016**

## WHY IMMUNIZE OUR CHILDREN?

Thanks to vaccines, some diseases are almost gone from the U.S., but we are also warned to immunize our children, ourselves as adults and the elderly.

### Diseases are becoming rare due to vaccinations.

Some diseases (like polio and diphtheria) are becoming very rare in the U.S. Of course, they are becoming rare largely because we have been vaccinating against them. But it is still reasonable to ask whether it's really worthwhile to keep vaccinating. It's much like bailing out a boat with a slow leak. When we started bailing, the boat was filled with water. But we have been bailing fast and hard, and now it is almost dry. We could say, "Good. The boat is dry now, so we can throw away the bucket and relax," but the leak hasn't stopped. Before long we'd notice a little water seeping in and soon it might be back up to the same level as when we started.



### Keep immunizing until disease is eliminated.

Unless we can "stop the leak" (eliminate the disease), it is important to keep immunizing. Even if there are only a few cases of disease today, if we take away the protection given by vaccination, more and more people will become infected and will spread disease to others. Soon we will undo the progress we have made over the years.

### What if we stopped vaccinating?

Diseases that are almost unknown would stage a comeback. Before long we would see epidemics of diseases that are nearly under control today.

### We vaccinate to protect our future.

We don't vaccinate just to protect our children. We also vaccinate to protect our grandchildren and their grandchildren. With one disease, smallpox, we "stopped the leak" in the boat by eradicating the disease. If we keep vaccinating now, parents in the future may be able to trust that diseases like polio and meningitis might also be eliminated. Vaccinations are one of the best ways to put an end to the serious effects of certain diseases.

### It's the healthy choice for your community.

Not vaccinating could have serious consequences. In the event of a disease outbreak, unvaccinated children can be excluded from school or child care, or even quarantined; they will be at a higher risk for catching and spreading disease. Those children could unknowingly expose a pregnant woman or tiny infant to a harmful disease. As Oregonians, we celebrate our independent spirit, but we also have a deep sense of community and caring for others. Immunization is one decision that will benefit us all.

### Protect yourself and your family.

Immunizations are an excellent way to protect yourself and your family against many diseases. Age-appropriate immunization starts at birth and continues through adulthood, with special emphasis through age two.

If you need help finding immunization services, contact your local health department or neighborhood pharmacy.

### Facts:

- All schools and children's facilities in Oregon are required to track immunization records.
- All schools, certified childcares, preschools and Head Start programs are required by law to complete an annual immunization report for their county health department.
- Oregon requires immunization against eleven vaccine-preventable diseases:
  - Diphtheria
  - Tetanus
  - Pertussis (Whooping Cough)
  - Polio
  - Varicella (chickenpox)
  - Measles
  - Mumps
  - Rubella
  - Hepatitis B
  - Hepatitis A
  - Hib (Haemophilus influenzae type B) - Only for children under age 5
- There are additional vaccines that children are not required to have to stay in school or childcare; however, experts agree that children should have them for optimal protection.
  - Pneumococcal
  - Influenza
  - Rotavirus
  - Meningococcal
  - HPV (human papillomavirus)

- Oregon allows two kinds of exemptions, medical and non-medical. A medical exemption is signed by a physician or the county health department. A non-medical exemption is signed by a parent or guardian with an attached Vaccine Education Certificate verifying completion of education about immunizations, either from a health care practitioner or the online vaccine education module.
- Statewide Exclusion Day is always the third Wednesday in February. Oregon Revised Statute 433.267 clearly requires the administrator of schools and facilities to exclude children who are not in compliance with immunization requirements.

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