

# AUGUST: National Immunization Month



## WHAT IS IMMUNIZATION?

Immunization is the process that strengthens an individual's immune system against a disease-causing agent. Immunization can be done in various ways, most commonly through vaccination. Vaccines against germs that can cause disease can prepare the body's immune system to fight and/or prevent an infection.

## WHY GET IMMUNIZED?

The goal of public health is to prevent disease because it is easier to prevent than to treat. Immunizations not only protect us from serious diseases, but also prevent the spread of these diseases to others. Throughout recent history, immunizations have prevented a widespread occurrence of once common childhood infectious diseases, such as measles, mumps and whooping cough, but also practically ended more serious widespread occurrences, such as polio and smallpox.

## FIVE IMPORTANT REASONS TO VACCINATE YOUR CHILD

### 1 Immunization can save your child's life.

Because of advances in medical science, your child can be protected against more serious diseases than ever before. Some diseases, like polio, which at one time disabled and/or killed thousands of children, have been eliminated completely due to safe and effective vaccines.

### 2 Vaccination is very safe and effective.

Vaccines have been well tested and despite causing some discomfort and pain, serious side effects and reactions are very rare. The disease-prevention benefits and trauma prevention are much greater than the side effects of vaccines.

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### 3 Immunization protects others you care about.

American children still get vaccine-preventable diseases. In fact, recently the nation has seen a reoccurrence of measles and whooping cough. Vaccination will protect not only your children, but will prevent the spread of these diseases to your friends, neighbors and your community.

### 4 Immunization can save your family time and money.

A child suffering from a vaccine-preventable disease can be denied attendance at school or acceptance to childcare facilities. Some can result in longer term disabilities that can result in lost time at work, high medical bills and long-term care. In contrast, vaccinations are a good investment, a much cheaper alternative and usually covered by insurance.

### 5 Immunization protects future generations

Vaccines have reduced or eliminated many diseases that killed and/or severely disabled people only a few generations ago. For example, the smallpox vaccine has completely ended that disease worldwide and vaccinating children against German measles (rubella) has dramatically reduced the risk that pregnant women will pass this virus to their children, greatly reducing the birth defects associated with that disease. Vaccinating now will prevent many diseases from affecting future generations.

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**SO BE WISE, IMMUNIZE!**

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## MORE INFORMATION

S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control | [www.scdhec.gov](http://www.scdhec.gov)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services | [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov)



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