

FACTS *not* FEAR

The Pennsylvania Medical Society (PAMED) has put together these FACTS to dispel some of the MYTHS related to vaccines.

When you know the facts, vaccines don't seem so scary.



MYTH: Pediatricians “push” vaccines because they are getting kickbacks from pharmaceutical companies and insurers.

FACT: Physicians administer vaccines based on the evidence-based vaccination schedules developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), which consists of a group of medical and public health experts.

Some insurers offer financial incentives to physicians for keeping health care costs low; however, the incentives are based on physicians performing a comprehensive list of preventive services aimed at preventing illnesses and keeping patients healthy and out of the hospital.

In addition, the Physician Payments Sunshine Act requires applicable manufacturers of drugs, devices, biologicals, or medical supplies to annually report to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services certain payments or other transfers of value made to physicians and teaching hospitals. This data is available to the public.

MYTH: When physicians ban unvaccinated patients from their practice, it's simply an access to care issue. An unvaccinated child does not put other children in harm's way.

FACT: Physicians take an oath to do no harm — to protect the patients they serve. An unvaccinated child in the waiting room at the pediatrician's office who may be carrying an infectious disease such as measles could make others sick — for example, babies who are too young to receive certain vaccines or a child who medically cannot be vaccinated and depends on herd immunity to stay as healthy as they can.

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MYTH: Herd immunity isn't a real thing.

FACT: Herd immunity, also known as community immunity, is very real. It protects everyone, but is especially important because some people can't get vaccinated against certain diseases — such as those with weakened or failing immune systems.

Source: <https://www.vaccines.gov/basics/work/protection>

See how herd immunity works: <https://www.historyofvaccines.org/content/herd-immunity-0>

MYTH: All CDC recommended vaccinations are required for children to attend school.

FACT: The intent of the Pennsylvania school vaccination regulations is to ensure that school children are immunized against diseases which spread easily in schools and can disrupt the learning environment. Therefore, vaccinations for diseases that are not easily transmitted in the school setting are not required for attendance in school.

School vaccination requirements for attendance in Pennsylvania schools:
<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/School%20Health/SIR8.pdf>

School vaccination regulations: <https://www.pacode.com/secure/data/028/chapter23/subchapCtoc.html>

CDC recommendations: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/child-adolescent.html>

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MYTH: Some pediatricians make parents sign waivers when they refuse to vaccinate their children. There is no good reason for this.

FACT: Yes, some pediatricians require parents to sign waivers when they go against their recommended advice, such as following the CDC's vaccination schedule. But, it's not without good reason. Federal law mandates that physicians discuss the risks and benefits of every vaccine with parents as well as provide parents with a Vaccine Information Statement for each vaccine.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that physicians also document a parent's refusal to vaccinate that focuses parents' attention on the unnecessary risk for which they are accepting responsibility, similar to all other refusals of recommended care.

Vaccine Information Statement requirements:
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/about/facts-vis.html>

Source: https://www.aap.org/en-us/Documents/immunization_refusaltovaccinate.pdf



MYTH: Vaccines have horrible ingredients. No one researches them and they are just thrown into vaccines.

FACT: Vaccines go through a rigorous approval process with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) just as over-the-counter and prescription drugs do.

The FDA requires that vaccines undergo an extensive development program in the laboratory, as well as in animal studies and human clinical trials, to determine their safety and effectiveness. Highly trained FDA scientists and clinicians carefully evaluate all of the information and make a determination whether to license (approve) a vaccine before it can be used in the U.S. Prior to licensure, as part of the FDA's evaluation, it takes all of the ingredients of a vaccine into account, including the active ingredients as well as other substances. After the FDA approves a vaccine, it continuously monitors its safety.

There have been concerns raised about some vaccine ingredients such as aluminum. However, using this as an example, aluminum is also found in drinking water, fruits and vegetables, flour, cereals, nuts, dairy products, honey, antacids, buffered aspirin, antiperspirants, and more.

Sources: <https://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-ingredients/aluminum>

<https://www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/safety-availability-biologics/common-ingredients-us-licensed-vaccines>

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/additives.htm>

MYTH: Federal law shields vaccine manufacturers with immunity from vaccine-related liability. As a result, the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program has paid out more than \$4 billion for thousands of vaccine injuries or deaths.

FACT: It has been cited that the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program has paid out just over \$4 billion for alleged vaccine injuries or deaths. However, this data is from the inception of the program in 1988, and some of it includes attorney fees, which also get paid out of the compensation program fund. Looking at more recent data, from 2006-2017, 3.4 billion doses of vaccines were administered. However, during this time, only 6,400 petitions (.000188%) were decided by the court, and of those, an even smaller number (4,400 petitions or .000129%) were determined to be compensable. Let's do the math. This means that, for every 1 million doses of vaccines administered, only 1 petition of an alleged vaccine-related injury or death was found to have merit and thus compensated by the program.

Source: <https://www.hrsa.gov/vaccine-compensation/index.html>



MYTH: The number of required vaccines has tripled since 1986.

FACT: Currently, there are 14 vaccines recommended for children birth — age 18. Of those, eight were approved between 1987 and 2006, three were approved prior to 1986, and three that were approved prior to 1986 have been updated since their initial approval.

Sources: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/downloads/past/2017-child.pdf>

<https://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-history/developments-by-year>

PAMED Positions on Vaccine-Related Legislation

- **HB 286 (Rep. Metcalfe)** — PAMED opposes this legislation. It would force physicians to treat unvaccinated children and also prevent them from requiring parents/guardians to sign a waiver as a condition for continuing to provide care.
- **SB 653 (Sen. Leach)** — PAMED supports this legislation. It would remove the religious and philosophical exemptions from school vaccination requirements.



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