

Protecting Our Children & Relatives: Why Vaccines Matter

Vaccines are critical to develop community immunity. They not only help protect infants and children from serious diseases, but also make it harder for disease to spread. For American Indian and Alaska Native families, vaccines are especially important because people can be at higher risk for severe illness from some infections.

Vaccines Help Keep Families and Communities Healthy

- When children are vaccinated, it helps protect elders, relatives, and others who may get very sick from infections.
- Vaccination helps prevent the spread of disease in homes, schools, and communities.
- Fewer illnesses mean fewer missed school and work days and fewer emergency trips for care.

Vaccines Have Protected Children for Generations

- Babies and young children have immune systems that are still developing.
- Some germs can cause serious breathing problems, hospital stays, or long-term health issues.
- Vaccines help protect children build warrior cells that can recognize germs and fight off diseases.
- Many serious childhood diseases are now rare because of vaccines. If fewer people are vaccinated, these diseases can come back.
- Vaccines help protect today's children, our traditions, and our future generations.

Vaccines Are Carefully Studied

- Vaccines must be proven to be highly effective and very safe before they are approved.
- Doctors and scientists continue to monitor vaccine safety after approval.
- Most side effects are mild, such as a sore arm or low fever, and go away quickly.

Staying on Schedule Matters

- Vaccine schedules are designed to provide protection to children at the right age and at the right time. Delaying vaccines can leave children unprotected when they are most vulnerable.

Trusted Care in Your Community

- Vaccines are available through IHS, Tribal, and Urban Indian health clinics.
- Your healthcare team is here to answer questions and support your family.
- Vaccine visits are also a chance to check your child's growth, development, and overall health.

Your Child's Health Matters

Choosing to vaccinate is one way that families help protect their children so they can grow, learn, and thrive. If you have questions or concerns, please talk with your healthcare provider.

This information is meant to support families in making informed decisions about their children's health.