



## A guide to...

# Vaccinations

## *Patient Information*

Children's Emergency Department (CED)

Watford General Hospital



Vaccinations are the most effective way to prevent infectious diseases. They prevent up to three million deaths worldwide, every year. It is the most important thing that we can do to protect both ourselves, and our children, as well as those around us.

Since their introduction into the UK, diseases such as polio, measles and tetanus had disappeared or were seen very rarely. Sadly, as more people choose NOT to vaccinate themselves or their children, these deadly but preventable diseases are increasing in numbers.

### **How do vaccines work?**

Vaccines teach your immune system how to create antibodies that protect you from diseases. It is much safer for your immune system to learn this through vaccination than by catching the diseases and treating them. Once your immune system knows how to fight a disease, it is often able to protect you for many years.

### **Herd Immunity**

Having a vaccine also benefits the whole community through 'herd immunity'. If enough people are vaccinated, it's harder for the disease to spread to those people who, for medical reasons, cannot receive vaccines.

For example, If 95% of people receive the MMR vaccine, then measles can be eradicated. However, if less than 90% are vaccinated, we don't have herd immunity and measles returns.

### **Are vaccines safe?**

**YES!** They are extensively tested over years to ensure their safety even before being given. Once in routine use, monitoring of side effects continues through the MHRA reporting system.

### **Who cannot be vaccinated?**

- Someone who has previously had anaphylaxis to the vaccine
- Someone who has serious allergy to any of the ingredients contained within the vaccine
- Someone with a weakened immune system.

## PLEASE DO NOT BELIEVE SOCIAL MEDIA MYTHS!

### Vaccinations DO

- ✓ protect you and your child from many serious and potentially deadly diseases
- ✓ protect other people in your community – by helping to stop diseases spreading to people who cannot have vaccines
- ✓ undergo rigorous safety testing before being introduced – they're also constantly monitored for side effects after being introduced
- ✓ sometimes cause mild side effects that will not last long – some children may feel a bit unwell and have a sore arm for two or three days
- ✓ reduce or even get rid of some diseases – if enough people are vaccinated

### Vaccinations DON'T

- ✗ do not cause autism – studies have found no evidence of a link between the MMR vaccine and autism
- ✗ do not overload or weaken the immune system – it's safe to give children several vaccines at a time and this reduces the amount of injections they need
- ✗ do not cause allergies or any other conditions – all the current evidence tells us that vaccinating is safer than not vaccinating
- ✗ do not contain mercury (thiomersal)
- ✗ do not contain any ingredients that cause harm in such small amounts – but speak to your doctor if you have any known allergies such as eggs or gelatine

If your child is unvaccinated, we urge you to please make an appointment to discuss with your GP or practice nurse.

**Vaccinations save lives.**

During your visit to our department, please do not ask to be isolated because you or your child are unvaccinated.

Unfortunately we have very limited isolation space and must keep these for immunocompromised patients or infectious patients. We therefore cannot accommodate this request. Thank you.

### Resources

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/why-vaccination-is-safe-and-important/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-complete-routine-immunisation-schedule>

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 187** or email **westherts.pals@nhs.uk**



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