What if . . .

What if you don't immunize your child? Parents, please consider the consequences of not immunizing your child. Your vaccination decision affects not only the health of your child, but also the health of your family, your child's friends and their families, and your community.



Without immunizations your child is at risk for catching a vaccine-preventable disease.

Vaccines were developed to protect people from dangerous and often fatal diseases. Vaccines are safe and effective, and vaccine-preventable diseases are still a threat.

- Influenza or "flu" is a serious respiratory disease that can be deadly. Healthy infants and toddlers are especially vulnerable to the complications of influenza. Tragically, every year in the United States children die from influenza.
- Pertussis or "whooping cough" is an extremely dangerous disease for infants. It is not easily treated and can result in permanent brain damage or death. Since the 1980s, the number of cases of pertussis has increased, especially among babies younger than 6 months and teenagers. In 2010, several states reported an increase in cases and outbreaks of pertussis, including a state-wide epidemic in California. Many infants died from whooping cough during this epidemic.
- Measles is dangerous and very contagious. It is still common in many countries and is easily brought into the United States by returning vacationers and foreign visitors. The number of reported measles cases began to decline rapidly during the 1990s. Recently, vaccine hesitancy among parents in the United States and abroad has led to a growing number of children and teens who are under-vaccinated and thus, unprotected from measles. Unfortunately, measles cases are on the rise across this country and worldwide.
- Chickenpox is very contagious. Before the development of a vaccine, about 100 people died every year in the United States from chickenpox. Most were previously healthy. Children with chickenpox need to be kept out of day care or school for a week or more so they don't spread the disease to others.

Without immunizations your child can infect others.

Children who are not immunized can readily transmit vaccine-preventable diseases throughout the community.

- Unvaccinated children can pass diseases on to babies who are too young to be fully immunized.
- Unvaccinated children pose a threat to children and adults who can't be immunized for medical reasons. This includes people with leukemia and other cancers, immune system problems, and people receiving treatment or medications that suppress their immune system.
- Unvaccinated children can infect the small percentage of children who do not mount an immune response to vaccination.

Without immunizations your child may have to be excluded from school or child care.

During disease outbreaks, unimmunized children may be excluded from school or child care until the outbreak is over. This is for their own protection and the protection of others. It can cause hardship for the child and parent.

then . . .

- *Your child will be left at risk of catching the disease.*
- *Your child will be an infectious disease threat to others.*
- *Your child may have to be excluded from school or child care.*

what to do . . .

We strongly encourage you to immunize your child. Please discuss any concerns you have with a trusted healthcare provider or call the immunization coordinator at your local or state health department. Your vaccination decision affects not only the health of your child, but also all of your family, your child's friends and their families, and your community.

For more information about vaccines, go to

- Immunization Action Coalition
  www.immunize.org
  and www.vaccineinformation.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  www.cdc.gov/vaccines
  CDC-INFO Contact Center: (800) 232-4636
- American Academy of Pediatrics
  www.aap.org/immunization
- National Network for Immunization Information
  www.nnii.org
- Vaccine Education Center at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
  www.vaccine.chop.edu

Immunization Action Coalition
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fax: (651) 647-9131
www.immunize.org
www.vaccineinformation.org

This brochure was originally created by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Immunization Branch, and was modified with permission by the Immunization Action Coalition (IAC). The content was reviewed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, December 2011. It may be reproduced without permission. If you alter it, please acknowledge it was adapted from CDPH and IAC.

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if you don't immunize your child . . . what?