



The Daily Star Readers' Questions about Vaccines/Immunizations answered by Barbara Davies, PA-C  
Bassett Healthcare Network - Andes Health Center

**Q** Will the immunization give someone the disease it is supposed to prevent?

**A** No, immunizations have a very low dose of antigen (virus) that is killed or weakened. It causes the immune system to fight against it and then it is in the immune system's memory when someone encounters the virus.

**Q** Can vaccines actually make you sick?

**A** The answer to that is a bit tricky. Some immunizations as a side effect may cause low-grade fever, irritability and soreness at the site of injection. The flu vaccine gets a bad rap for this – it does NOT give you the flu. I know I'm not going to change many people's minds on this, but it really doesn't make you sick.

**Q** If most diseases that we take vaccines for are no longer around, why do we need the vaccines?

**A** Good question. We are very fortunate in this country to have very few cases of the diseases we immunize against. This has had a double-edged sword effect. Parents have forgotten or have never seen kids sick with diphtheria or rubella (German measles). Outside the U.S., however, it is a much higher risk to contract these illnesses. Rubella, for instance, is eliminated in this country but no other country outside the U.S. immunizes routinely.

This can cause serious birth defects in pregnant women. This is a problem because people can have the illness and be asymptomatic, putting unborn babies at risk.

**Q** Haven't vaccines been linked to autism?

**A** While there was one study that linked the MMR to autism, no other study has been able to reproduce those results. Even though this study has been proven wrong, many parents have stopped giving their kids the MMR or stopped having kids immunized altogether. This is a terrible idea. There is much more information on this at [CDC.gov/vaccines/parent/parent-questions.html](http://CDC.gov/vaccines/parent/parent-questions.html).

**Q** Can I choose not to vaccinate my child?

**A** Yes, there are opt-out options for parents/guardians whose religious beliefs go against immunizing children. However, I would encourage you to discuss this with your child's primary care provider and check with your school district. Many districts have strict guidelines for children who are not immunized.

**For more information on vaccine safety – go to [CDC.gov/vaccines](http://CDC.gov/vaccines)**

**For more information about services at Bassett, visit [bassett.org](http://bassett.org)**

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