

Immunization Advice From the Experts

Five homeopaths answer your most frequently asked questions

Immunizations are a controversial subject. Before making decisions about them, it's best to arm yourself with information from many different sources. To help you in your research, we put the most frequently asked questions to five homeopathic experts. Here are their answers.

Todd A. Hoover, MD, is a board certified family physician and homeopath practicing in Narberth, PA for over 10 years. He is a graduate of Jefferson Medical College and the New England School of Homeopathy. Dr. Hoover currently serves as the Vice President of the American Institute of Homeopathy, President on the Council of Homeopathic Education, and member of the Homeopathic Pharmacopeia of the United States. He has lectured and published on the subject of homeopathic vaccination and prophylaxis. He is also a yoga teacher, father, avid cyclist, and "full-time explorer of things unknown".

Randall Neustaedter, OMD, Lac, has practiced homeopathy and Oriental medicine for over 25 years, specializing in child health care. He is a licensed acupuncturist and received his Doctorate of Oriental Medicine in Hong Kong. He is author of *The Vaccine Guide: Risks and Benefits for Children and Adults*. He publishes a free e-mail newsletter. Subscribe with a message to randalln@concentric.net

Lara Sussman completed pre-clinical medicine before having her first child. She is training to be a homeopath, and has an MSc in child development. She and her husband Will Sussman are authors of the books *Vaccinations—Yes or No?* and *MMR—Understand Your Choices*, available from their website www.vaccinations-yesorno.co.uk. Will and Lara have two children and a new baby to be born in May.

Nicholas Nossman, MD, DHT, graduated from the University of Colorado School of Medicine in 1968 and has been practicing homeopathic medicine in Denver, CO since 1976. He is a former board member and president for the National Center for Homeopathy and is a member of the Rhus Tox study group of Homeopatia Internationalis. His other interests include Jungian psychology, photography, watercolors, golf, pantomime, and poetry.

Susan Curtis, RSHom, practices at the Neal's Yard Remedies Therapy Rooms in London's Covent Garden. She is the author of numerous books including *Handbook of Homeopathic Alternatives to Immunisation* and *Surviving With Natural Remedies*, available from homeopathic booksellers and distributors in the U.S.

Q: What are the most important pieces of advice you, as a homeopath, give to new parents contemplating vaccination for their new baby?

Todd Hoover, MD: As parents, you are ultimately the ones most affected by the consequences to either vaccinate or not vaccinate your child. You should first determine the exact state law that governs this decision where you live. If there is no provision for religious or philosophical objection to vaccination, your decision to not vaccinate your child could be viewed as child neglect by the authorities in your state, resulting in direct oversight of the medical care of your child and forced vaccination against your wishes.

If your state allows for philosophical objection to vaccination, then you have a somewhat difficult choice. After studying the subject in depth, I believe that vaccinations represent the only long-term, relatively effective method of preventing these very serious diseases. Some vaccines are better than others in terms of efficacy and side effects. All vaccines are stressful for your child and are capable of producing side effects. The relative health and constitution of the child is the single most predictive in the likelihood of a side effect occurring. Doctors and vaccine researchers are not inherently evil or misguided, and the constantly strive to find the safest and most effective ways to prevent serious contagious disease.

Based on a thorough review of the literature, I believe that the decreased incidence of these serious diseases is linked to improved sanitation and hygiene as well as to the introduction of vaccinations. However, I am deeply concerned about the catastrophic rise of chronic diseases like asthma, autism, and behavioral disorders. Much more research into the possible relationship between vaccinations and these epidemic problems needs to be done. At present, there is little data to support or reject any such association.

If your state permits exemption to vaccination, you may decide to withhold vaccinations from your child based on the simple philosophical decision that you do not wish to inject foreign bacterial/viral matter into your healthy child. Given that the infectious diseases for which people get vaccinated are exceedingly rare in the U.S., it is unlikely that your child would

suffer the consequences of once of them. Be aware, however, that in some cities it is becoming routine to remove unvaccinated children from schools whenever there is a child with an infectious disease for which the majority are vaccinated. In the case of chickenpox, this could result in your child being removed from school two or four weeks a year, without recourse.

You must decide to either vaccinate or not. You should have agreement within the family. Your decision will have potential consequences of either increased susceptibility to the infectious diseases (with potentially severe results if your child does become infected) or increased exposure to potential vaccine side effects. If there is a negative outcome, you alone will have to live with the greatest impact of that decision. However, your family and society will also pass judgment. If you have chosen a path that is consistent with the majority and there is a negative outcome, you will find support in your difficulty. If you have chosen the other path, you will quickly learn who are your true friends.

Randall Neustaedter, OMD, Lac: Consider the risks and benefits of each vaccine. Do not accept the bland reassurances of health professionals of public health authorities that your child will be safe if vaccinated. There is no question that vaccines have the potential to undermine immune function in some children who receive them. Many vaccine investigators agree that the increase in asthma, diabetes, autism, and some autoimmune diseases is directly attributed to vaccine use in children. Educate yourself about disease incidence, vaccine effectiveness, and vaccine adverse effects before you agree to any vaccinations. Make an informed choice based on your own personal research. Read books and articles about vaccine issues.

Lara Sussman: When considering vaccination it is important to remember that every family is different and that no hard and fast rule applies to everyone. Look at your family history and see how others have reacted to vaccinations. If there is a history of severe allergies, bowel problems, or autism, I would think very carefully before vaccinating. Do you travel a lot with your baby? Some countries have higher incidences of diphtheria and polio, for example, where

your baby would be more at risk if unvaccinated. Do your own research into the side effects of vaccinations (e.g. our book, *Vaccinations—Yes or No?*) so that you can be assured that you've made an informed decision whichever way you decide.

Don't forget that you can choose which vaccinations your baby has and when. Don't be bullied by the medical profession. Do make a decision and try not to let it plague you—move on and enjoy your baby! Also, don't forget that if you are breastfeeding, your baby will get a lot of immunity from you and it would be unnecessary to vaccinate quite so early in their life.

Nicholas Nossman, MD, DHT: Immunization issues are not black and white, as public health authorities or anti-vaccines-at-any-cost advocates would have us believe. All vaccines are artificial disease products, accompanied with preservatives or varying potential toxicity. Their introduction into the body is a serious proposition. On the other hand, the likelihood of death or serious damage from these vaccine targeted diseases varies with each disease—many of the involve tremendous suffering, some are permanently damaging, and some are fatal.

The immunization decision is a *gamble*: not immunizing, with the potential consequences of getting the disease, versus immunizing and facing the potential consequences of receiving the vaccine. Health departments risk-benefit statistics clearly favor immunizations. However, I know from experience that in addition to the children who are obviously damaged by an immunization, there are many others with a variety of subtle but serious vaccine reactions. These children would never officially be classified as having had adverse reactions, but it's clear that they have been weakened in some way by the vaccine. *Herein lies the gray area of vaccine consequences.*

Some immunizations are better risks, or gambles, than others. The effectiveness of immunizing the population lies in the coverage of the largest portion possible of the "herd", to limit the spread of these targeted diseases. Nonetheless, the decision to immunize rightly belongs to the individual—or the parent, in the case of children.

I have serious concerns about the shift in the ecology of the population by immunologic eradication of certain diseases, which has been followed by the incidence of new illnesses, heretofore unknown. Whether vaccines have

contributed to this shift is an open question, but worthy of consideration in the array of modifications of our environment which have taken place in this and the past century.

Another ecological consideration is that vaccines have limited years of effectiveness, regularly underestimated by public health authorities (for example, the shorter than expected duration of immunity to measles from the measles vaccine, with the requirement of immunization for college-age people who had been vaccinated in their childhood. Also, when people contract these vaccine targeted diseases later in life (such as measles and chickenpox), they tend to get more severe cases. This is one of the many areas in which we must be very careful about trying to gain dominion over nature.

Q: I have chosen to vaccinate my child. Should I give a homeopathic remedy before and/or after each vaccination to protect them from side effects? If so, what remedy and how should I give it?

Todd Hoover, MD: The best anecdotal evidence for giving a homeopathic remedy after a vaccination comes from the use of *Thuja occidentalis* after smallpox vaccination where it reportedly prevented some of the serious side effects common to that vaccination. Many homeopaths have extrapolated that experience into using *Thuja* after all vaccinations. The logic of this choice is dubious.

For about three years I used *Thuja*, *Silicea*, or *Arnica* in my practice routinely after vaccination. I found no observable difference in the subsequent nine years when I did not use any routine remedies. I noted that when children are of specific constitutional types such as *Silicea*, *Thuja*, *Medorrhinum*, and *Stamonium*, they are more susceptible to the stress of vaccination and develop symptoms consistent with their constitution. Strong consideration should be given to the prophylactic use of these remedies for these specific children at the time of vaccination. If these children are not treated prophylactically and subsequently develop symptoms, the symptoms will usually disappear after they receive their constitutional remedy.

Randall Neustaedter, OMD, Lac: I do not recommend the routine use of homeopathic remedies for any purpose. Homeopathic prescriptions are based on presenting symptoms. If no symptoms instead of jam. Offer lots of fresh or

are present, then do not treat. I recommend using Vitamins C, A, and D to prevent complications of vaccines. *Thuja* is specific to smallpox vaccine reactions. If symptoms of fever, lethargy, or worse develop after a vaccine, then treat with the homeopathic medicine most similar to the symptoms, whether it is *Aconite*, *Belladonna*, *Gelsemium*, *Cuprum*, or any other indicated medicine.

Lara Sussman: There are two options open to you if you decide to vaccinate. The first is to give the disease in remedy form (i.e., the nosode) immediately before and after you vaccinate to ensure as much as possible that your child will suffer fewer side effects. It is best if you see a homeopath who can prescribe the remedies for you rather than doing it yourself.

The second option is to vaccinate and wait and see if there are any obvious side effects and then see your homeopath who will prescribe the appropriate remedy for your child, depending on the side effects and your child's constitution. The problem with this approach is that first, you may not pick up on the more subtle side effects of the vaccine, and second, if your child suffers a delayed side effect, say three weeks after the vaccination, you might not realize that this reaction was caused by the vaccine. Don't forget to take your baby to a homeopath before you vaccinate so that the homeopath has a chance to see your child before and after vaccinations to get a good idea of any changes in their health or personality.

Susan Curtis: The following remedies will help with any localized or short-term effects; if you suspect that any longer term problems date from the time of a vaccination then you will need to consult a qualified homeopath for an individualized prescription.

Remedies for the immediate side-effects of vaccination:

Aconite. Symptoms brought on by fear or trauma following the vaccination itself. The symptoms could include feverishness, sleeplessness, earache, or cold symptoms.

Belladonna. Fever or convulsions following a vaccination.

Ledum. Swelling or localized pain at the site of injection.

The chosen remedy should be given in the 30c potency 3 times a day for 2-3 days depending on the severity of the reaction. As with all homeopathic remedies, the remedy should be stopped once signs of improvement are noticed.

Q: Will the homeopathic remedy for the side effects of the vaccination antidote the vaccination?

Todd Hoover, MD: No. Not in my experience or understanding. The bigger concern would be that the vaccination stress would potentially "antidote" the constitutional remedy.

Lara Sussman: Giving the nosode before and after vaccination will not antidote the vaccine. Remember though, that no conventional vaccine gives 100% coverage. Some only ensure 75% protection while others like the MMR ensure about 90%.

Q: I have chosen not to vaccinate my child. How can I best protect him/her in general?

Todd Hoover, MD: The best protection for both vaccinated and unvaccinated children revolves around making them as healthy and resilient as possible. Good nutrition, solid family environment, loving care, fresh air, and exercise go a long way to fostering strong children. Solid constitutional homeopathic care can also improve the strength of the child.

Randall Neustaedter, OMD, Lac: Keep your children healthy and stop being afraid of these diseases. Fear is an outmoded response to childhood infectious disease. Promote the strength of your child's immune system instead, and avoid things that can weaken it. This will prevent complications of diseases.

Keep your child's diet clean. Avoid foods that promote inflammatory reactions. Do not give your child partially hydrogenated fats, the ones contained in packaged snack foods. Read labels of prepared foods and you will find these fats in crackers, chips, cookies, and desserts. The fats promote inflammation and prevent healthy fatty acids from being incorporated into cells. Stop feeding your child fried foods. The oils are rancid. Stay away from fast food burger palaces. Supplement your child's diet with Omega-3 fats in the form of fish oil supplements, cod liver oil, or Neuromins (made from algae).

Avoid foods with added sugar. Stop giving your child sugared breakfast cereals, sodas, cookies, and ice cream. Corn syrup is especially difficult for the body to metabolize. Read labels. Corn syrup is everywhere. Use fruit spreads

dried fruits or fruit rolls. Use whole grains and whole wheat bread rather than products made with "wheat flour", which means white flour. Use organic fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and juices whenever possible, and your child will not be eating pesticides that injure the liver.

Lara Sussman: It is important if you decide not to vaccinate that you are responsible about your child's health. This means ensuring a good healthy diet. Nobody's perfect, but junk food all day every day is going to weaken their general vitality. Also make sure that your child gets enough exercise and fresh air which is so important for their health. Your child will really benefit from seeing a homeopath who can give a constitutional remedy which will strengthen your child's resistance to disease.

Q: I have chosen not to vaccinate my child. How can I protect them against specific diseases such as measles or whooping cough?

Todd Hoover, MD: If your unvaccinated child is exposed to a highly infectious disease, you should consult your homeopath. Avoidance of the exposure is the simplest and most direct course. If this is impossible (as in the case of whooping cough, which is carried in the adult population), prophylactic use of specific homeopathic remedies may be useful. Studies on preventative use of homeopathic remedies have demonstrated short-term efficacy, up to several weeks. The exact effectiveness is not clear, but it is certainly not 100%. The best homeopathic remedy in this situation is chosen based upon the specific nature of the infectious disease, *at that time*. Homeopathic remedies based upon the disease organism or the historical data have also been used with varying efficacy.

Randall Neustaedter, OMD, Lac: Breastfeeding is the best protection you can provide for your infant. Continue for at least 6-12 months if possible. The longer you breastfeed, the more benefit your child will experience. Breastfeeding prevents infections and the complications of childhood illness.

Seek out a homeopathic practitioner, naturopathic physician, or an acupuncturist familiar with treating children. He or she will provide treatments that build immune function immunizations, though I know there are various protocols throughout the

and the strength and health of the vital force.

Lara Sussman: If you do not vaccinate against common diseases like measles and whooping cough, you have to be aware that your child may catch these diseases. And they often benefit as a result: parents repeatedly report that their children experience a physical or mental developmental growth spurt following a childhood illness.

Read up on the signs and symptoms of each disease so that you can prepare yourself. One option is to see a homeopath who can give you nosodes, which are homeopathic remedies made from the particular disease. These won't prevent your child from getting the disease, but may lead to a milder case with fewer complications.

Susan Curtis: There have always been a minority of people who have chosen not to vaccinate themselves or their children. In the case of the MMR vaccine (for measles, mumps, and rubella), this minority has grown in recent years. In parts of the UK, the use of the MMR vaccine has dropped from 97% to 65% due to a well publicized link made by Dr. A. Wakefield at the Royal Free Hospital in London between the MMR vaccine given to infants and a type of bowel disease the can lead to autism. [Wakefield et al., *Lancet*, 1998; 351(9103):637-41]

If you choose not to immunize, then you will want to know about homeopathic prophylaxis: the method of taking homeopathic remedies to prevent a disease. The theory is that you take a particular remedy into your system, so that it is ready to act should you come into contact with the corresponding disease. The disease will therefore not get a chance to establish itself and you will not experience any symptoms, or you will experience a milder case of the disease. If the action of the homeopathic remedy isn't needed, the body simply doesn't utilize it. *[For more specific information about prophylaxis, see Susan Curtis' answer to the next question.]*

Q: I have heard that instead of conventional vaccinations, I can use homeopathic remedies to immunize my child. Is this true and if so, how do they work and how should they be given?

Todd Hoover, MD: On review of the available evidence, it appears that some homeopathic remedies are capable of will be more susceptible to any disease.

preventing some diseases over the short run (i.e., for several weeks). The best designed study on homeopathic prevention of disease was done on tularemia in mice. [Jonas, W.B., "Do Homeopathic Nosodes Protect Against Infection? An Experimental Test." *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine* 1999 Sep; 5(5):36-40] It showed a partial effectiveness of homeopathy of approximately 22% compared to approximately 100% effectiveness of the vaccine. There have been well documented studies on meningococcal meningitis prevention with homeopathy and good anecdotal reports on the prevention of smallpox.

There have also been studies that showed no effect of homeopathy in the prevention of influenza and whooping cough. Homeopathic remedies clearly appear to have some effect but better studies are needed before blanket recommendations can be considered. Additionally, all of the positive studies to date were conducted over a short exposure period after treatment. There have been no studies that have shown long-term efficacy of homeopathic remedies to prevent these diseases.

The remedies are usually given in low potency (6C or 12C) on a repeated basis during the exposure. You should remember that occasionally symptoms could result when taking a remedy on a repeated basis, and if this happens it is best to simply stop the remedy and seek professional homeopathic advice.

Randall Neustaedter, OMD, Lac:

There is some meager evidence that nosodes or other epidemic remedies may prevent or mitigate the symptoms of disease during an epidemic or following an exposure: some surveys have been done on the remedies *Pertussin* for whooping cough, *Influenzium* for influenza, *Oscilloccinum* for influenza, *Meningococcinum* for meningitis, and *Lathyrus* for polio. There is also a long history in homeopathy of using a remedy that fits most of the cases during an epidemic (i.e., the *genus epidemicus* remedy) to prevent serious disease in those who might be exposed. There is no evidence that nosodes provide any long term protection, however. Classical homeopaths are generally averse to giving remedies routinely that have no relevance to an individuals presenting symptoms because of the possibility of disruption of the case.

Nicholas Nossman, MD, DHT: I am not aware of reliable evidence of the effectiveness of homeopathic

world for doing so. I'm concerned that repeated doses of the potentized vaccine materials, as advocated in some of these protocols, could result with proving symptoms along with no guarantee of protection.

Lara Sussman: There is nothing you can use homeopathically that will ensure your child would not get the disease if exposed to it. However, nosodes, which are remedies made from the particular disease, may help result in a less severe case. Homeopaths believe that children benefit greatly from catching the common childhood diseases and as long as they are healthy and nursed well throughout the illness, they will be fine and show a developmental leap physically and mentally after they have recovered. I have certainly seen this in my own children.

Susan Curtis: Homeopathic prophylaxis is not the same as vaccination, and the immune system is not "armed" long-term against the disease. The homeopathic remedies are taken immediately after direct contact or during an outbreak, and protection would be expected to last beyond a few days.

Unfortunately, few systematic clinical trials have been carried out with homeopathic prophylaxis. There are, however, a number of clinical reports of its efficacy to be found in homeopathic books. The eminent British homeopath Dorothy Shepherd (1971-1952), writes that the homeopathic remedy *Pertussin* was given daily for 2 weeks to 364 cases after contact with whooping cough and not one child developed the disease. [Shepherd, Dorothy. *Homeopathy in Epidemic Diseases*.] Leslie Speight writes of another doctor in 1850 who gave *Lathyrus sativa* to 82 people who were in close proximity to a polio outbreak with 12 people in direct contact, and not one developed the disease. [Speight, Phyllis. *Homeopathy and Immunization*] There are many accounts in current farming journals of homeopathic veterinarians getting excellent results by giving homeopathic nosodes to farm animals in order to prevent common farm diseases. [Day, Christopher. *Homeopathic Treatment of Beef and Dairy Cattle*.]

There is never any absolute guarantee that you will not get a disease, whatever measures you take, because there is always a possibility that you are exceptionally susceptible to a particular disease. In addition, if your immune system is already under strain, then you

Prophylactic remedies may be any of the range of remedies made from plants, animal products, or minerals, or they may be a special type of remedy called a nosode. Nosodes are made from diseased body tissue or discharges such as saliva. Like any other homeopathic remedy, the process of potentization renders them chemically harmless but homeopathically active.

The choice of remedy to be given is based on the recorded experiences of homeopaths over the years. For example, the use of the nosode *Pertussin* in the prevention of whooping cough is well recorded by a number of homeopaths over a 60 year period, whereas the most commonly used prophylactic for polio is *Lathyrus*, which is not a nosode but a remedy made from a plant.

It is only appropriate to give the prophylactic remedy during an outbreak or if you suspect exposure to the disease. Certain prophylactics should also be taken if traveling to parts of the world where the disease is prevalent. The tetanus prophylactic need only be given following a deep, puncture wound or any serious injury where the skin is broken and infection is a possibility.

The homeopathic prophylactic remedies for the main diseases for which children are vaccinated are listed here. For a complete list and also for the main remedies used to treat the illnesses themselves, see my book, *Homeopathic Alternatives to Immunization*.

- Diphtheria: *Pyrogenium* nosode
- Measles: *Morbillinum* nosode
- Haemophilus influenza B: *Haemophilus influenza B* nosode
- Mumps: *Parotidinum* nosode
- Polio: *Lathyrus sativa*
- Rubella: *Rubella* nosode
- Tetanus: *Ledum palustre*
- Whooping Cough (Pertussis): *Pertussin* nosode

Homeopathic prophylactics are usually taken in the 30C potency, and should be taken 2 times a week (e.g., one does on Monday and on does on Thursday) for the duration of an outbreak, or 2 times a week for 3 weeks following direct exposure to the disease. [Most nosode remedies are available by prescription only in the U.S. You are strongly advised to consult a well trained homeopath.]

Q: My college-age son plans to travel the world for a year. There is a long list of recommended vaccinations from the health

department. What should he do?

Todd Hoover, MD: Consult a travel health specialist regarding not only the countries to be visited, but also the specific areas in the country where he would be spending time; travel to Cape Town, South Africa for a month is very different than a month in the bush country. Additionally, a visit to a homeopath to discuss the alternatives is wise. Many homeopaths will be happy to put together a first-aid homeopathic travel kit in addition to giving advice about immunizations.

Randall Neustaedter, OMD, Lac:

Vaccines for international travel fall into three general categories:

1. Routine vaccines normally given in childhood that may have lapsed or never been received.
2. Exotic vaccines recommended for travel to specific countries.
3. Required vaccines for entry into specific countries (Yellow fever is the only vaccine currently in this category.)

Here is a simple rule for vaccine decisions prior to international travel. First, gather information about current disease incidence in the city, province, or specific area of a country on your itinerary. Second, decide if the risks from vaccines for this disease outweigh your risk of exposure and significant illness. Third, determine whether the vaccine's efficacy is high enough to warrant risking its side effects.

FIGURE 1. Recommended immunization schedule for persons aged 0 through 6 years — United States, 2009 (for those who fall behind or start late, see the catch-up schedule [Table])

Vaccine ▼	Age ►	Birth	1 month	2 months	4 months	6 months	12 months	15 months	18 months	19–23 months	2–3 years	4–6 years
Hepatitis B ¹		HepB	HepB	see footnote 1		HepB						
Rotavirus ²				RV	RV	RV ²						
Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis ³				DTaP	DTaP	DTaP	see footnote 3	DTaP				DTaP
Haemophilus influenzae type b ⁴				Hib	Hib	Hib ⁴		Hib				
Pneumococcal ⁵				PCV	PCV	PCV		PCV				PPSV
Inactivated Poliovirus				IPV	IPV			IPV				IPV
Influenza ⁶							Influenza (Yearly)					
Measles, Mumps, Rubella ⁷							MMR		see footnote 7			MMR
Varicella ⁸							Varicella		see footnote 8			Varicella
Hepatitis A ⁹								HepA (2 doses)				HepA Series
Meningococcal ¹⁰												MCV

Range of recommended ages

Certain high-risk groups