



Education for Lifelong Health

What I should know about **VACCINES!**



What are vaccines?

Vaccines are a treatment to help prevent diseases. Vaccines are tested by scientists to make sure they work and are safe. People can get sick when germs such as bacteria or viruses attack our bodies. They can invade and multiply very quickly. We call this an infection. Many illnesses that used to be deadly can now be prevented with vaccines. When you have had a vaccine – we say you are vaccinated against that disease.

How do vaccines work?

When a disease attacks the body, the body will try to fight the infection. Vaccines work by preparing your body to defend itself against the disease. A vaccine is a small amount of the virus/bacteria. Our own defense system (called the immune system) can learn about the virus and be prepared – if the virus attacks in the future. Diseases can be prevented altogether or if people still get the disease, it will be milder and not as serious. It will also help to stop the spread of the disease to others. Some vaccinations can work with one shot, but some require more than one to work properly. Some (like the flu shot) need to be done every year. This is because some viruses can change how they attack – so the vaccine also needs to be changed to fight them.



How do I get a vaccine?

Always ask your doctor what vaccines are available, what they recommend for your age and health, and where you should get them. Vaccines are available for many diseases, – some examples include measles, the flu, and chicken pox. Vaccines are given at different ages for different diseases. Some are only given when we are young, and others are only given when we are old. Some are only given if there is a risk of a disease when we travel to another country. Some, like COVID-19 vaccines, are given to children, adults, and older people.



Vaccines work best when everyone gets them. It helps to stop the spread of a disease. It helps to protect people from ever getting the disease. In those that still get the disease, it will not be as deadly.

Most vaccinations are given into the muscle of our arm with a small needle. People with limb difference may need to have them in their thigh, or somewhere else where there is some muscle. Muscles have lots of blood vessels. This helps the vaccine spread quickly and help the body get ready to defend itself.

What happens after the injection?

Most people feel fine after a vaccination. Sometimes the vaccination can make your arm sore. Sometimes you may feel like you have a mild flu, feel very tired, have a headache or an upset tummy. If you feel ill for more than few days, you should contact your doctor. A very few people may have an allergic reaction that needs immediate emergency room treatment at your local hospital.



Why do some people not get vaccines?

Everybody has the right to say no to getting a vaccine. Unfortunately, some people have read wrong information about vaccinations, and it makes them scared.

If you are worried about having a vaccine, you should talk with your doctor about what scares you. Tell them what you think, what you have heard, or what you have read that makes you feel uncertain. Your doctor can talk through your fears and let you know whether you should have a vaccine.

A very small number of people do have health issues that makes it difficult for them to have a vaccine. Again, your doctor can advise you about whether they recommend a particular vaccine for you!



 **Vaccines save lives!**

 **Vaccines are safe!**

 **Vaccines work!**