

August is immunization awareness month! It is very important to immunize adults and children within the community. Vaccines help prevent and sometimes even eradicate certain diseases. There have been many misconceptions arising around the topic of immunization, especially those topics involving childhood vaccines. It is crucial that parents educate themselves with accurate information so they can make informed decisions about their own children's wellbeing. Below are some common misconceptions in the media recently:

- Childhood vaccines cause Autism- In recent years the chemical thimerosal, a preservative contained in vaccines, had been thought to cause autism among vaccinated children. However, studies conducted by the Institute of Medicine showed no relationship between the two. In fact, thimerosal was reduced to trace amounts or removed from childhood vaccines completely in 2001.
- Giving a child multiple vaccinations for different diseases at the same time increases the risk of harmful side effects and can overload the immune system- Children are exposed to many different types of antigens (viruses, bacteria, etc.) every day. Studies by the Institute of Medicine show that simultaneous vaccination with multiple vaccines has no adverse effect on the normal childhood immune system. If your child is sick, running a fever or has a compromised immune system however, you may want to speak with your child's pediatrician before giving certain vaccines. Otherwise, administering multiple vaccines at once is considered safe for the child and more convenient for parents.
- The majority of people who get disease have been vaccinated- No vaccine is 100% effective at preventing disease. Most childhood vaccines are effective for 85% to 95% of recipients which means that there is still a chance of getting sick even after vaccination. Most vaccines contain an inactivated or "dead" virus such as the flu shot. These vaccines will NOT make you sick from the virus in them. Some vaccines do contain a "weakened" virus such as the varicella (chickenpox) vaccine. After a few weeks, these may cause some symptoms such as body aches, fevers or fatigue but will not cause the diseases they are meant to prevent.
- The DTaP vaccine increases the risk of SIDS- This myth developed because of the coincidence that Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) commonly occurs at the same age that 3 doses of DTaP are routinely scheduled for children. Studies by the Institute of Medicine report that there is no association between SIDS and the DTaP vaccine.

Reliable health information can be very difficult to find on topics such as this. The internet can be a great resource for health information. However, it can also provide misleading information. [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) is a great website to find reliable information about vaccine safety along with many other wellness topics.