



## **Don't Wait to Vaccinate**

*A Parent's Guide to Immunizations*

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Vaccinations boost a child's immune system and help protect kids from serious infections and diseases. It's especially important for parents to make sure children under age 5 receive certain childhood vaccinations to help keep them healthy as their bodies grow and immune systems develop.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), vaccine-preventable diseases are now at or near record lows – thanks to vaccinations. Before vaccines, many children suffered from diseases that vaccines now prevent, such as whooping cough, measles, and polio. Those same germs exist today, but kids are protected by vaccines, so we do not see these diseases as often.

August is National Immunization Awareness Month and, as kids get ready to start preschool and kindergarten, First 5 San Joaquin provides parents and caregivers answers to frequently asked questions about vaccinations. Remember to also consult with a family doctor for your child's specific needs.

### **When does my child need to be vaccinated?**

Pediatricians advise that children receive their first vaccination at birth. Your local health department or family doctor can provide you with an immunization schedule and help you decide what is best for your child. Immunization schedules and guidelines are also available on the California Department of Public Health Web site at [www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov).

### **Why should my child be vaccinated?**

Childhood vaccines have kept children in the U.S. healthy for more than 50 years and have proven to be effective in preventing many diseases. The Food and Drug Administration, along with the CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics and American Academy of Family Physicians ensure all vaccines are continually tested and inspected to be sure they are safe for kids.

### **How much do vaccines cost?**

Vaccines are available to all children, regardless of family income. Many health care plans provide children's vaccines for free or for a small fee. California programs Healthy Families and Medi-Cal also offer free immunizations for eligible children.

### **How can I prepare my child for a vaccine shot?**

Arrive on time for the doctor's appointment and bring your child's favorite toy, book, or snack to comfort and keep your child occupied in the waiting room. Make sure to give your child a big hug after the vaccination shot!

First 5 San Joaquin encourages parents to learn more about vaccinations and ways to help protect young kids and keep them healthy. For more information, contact First 5 San Joaquin at (209) 953-5437 or [www.sjckids.org](http://www.sjckids.org) and [www.first5california.com/parents](http://www.first5california.com/parents).

### **About First 5 San Joaquin**

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50

cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5. First 5 San Joaquin distributes approximately \$10 million in Prop. 10 revenues to programs and services that meet local needs.

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