

# Choosing not to vaccinate your child?

## Know your risks and responsibilities

The Canadian Paediatric Society urges **all** children to receive routine vaccinations and an annual influenza (flu) vaccine, unless there is a medical reason not to.

If you choose not to vaccinate your child, against one or more vaccine-preventable diseases, you should understand the risks. You need to know how to make it less likely that your child gets an infection or spreads disease to others.

### Protecting your child

Vaccines for babies and children prevent serious and sometimes deadly diseases, such as measles, mumps and meningitis. Any child can be exposed to these infections, even if they avoid people who have symptoms of illness. Measles germs, for example, can spread through the air. So while avoiding sick people is helpful, you can still come in contact with germs without knowing it.

### Protecting others

Delaying or refusing vaccines for your child also puts others at risk of illness, especially children and adults in cancer treatment, those with heart or lung disease or diabetes, newborn babies and the elderly.

Communities depend on high immunization rates to keep vaccine-preventable diseases from spreading. When more people are immunized, there is less risk for everyone.

If your child is sick and you call or visit a health care provider, immediately tell them that your child is not fully vaccinated. This may affect what tests they do. Precautions may need to be taken so that a vaccine-preventable disease does not spread from your child to other people.



## If you choose not to vaccinate your child, and a vaccine-preventable disease is active in your community

- Consider changing your mind and protecting your child with a vaccine.
- Your child may be asked to stay away from school, child care or other organized activities until the outbreak is over. This could be several weeks.
- Your child should stay away from newborn babies. Depending on the disease, they may also need to stay away from others with fragile health.
- Although it may be impossible to avoid exposure, learn about the disease and how it spreads.



## Tetanus: Vaccination is your best protection

- Tetanus (lockjaw) is caused by germs found in the soil. If your child is not vaccinated against tetanus, he is at risk even if everyone in your community is immunized.
- Even a minor cut that has a tiny bit of soil in it can cause an infection. Over 10% of children and adults who get tetanus will die, even with the best intensive care.
- If your child has not received at least 3 doses of tetanus vaccine and has a major cut or injury, she should be given a special blood product called “tetanus immune globulin” as soon as possible to prevent tetanus.

## Travelling without vaccination

- When travelling to another country, you and your family may be at risk of diseases for which vaccines are not routinely given in Canada.
- If your child gets sick, she may not receive the same quality medical care she would get at home. Consider having your child vaccinated before travelling to such countries.

### Other resources:

- Caring for Kids: [www.caringforkids.cps.ca](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca)
- *Your Child's Best Shot: A parent's guide to vaccination*: [www.cps.ca](http://www.cps.ca)



Canadian  
Paediatric  
Society



This resource was produced with an unrestricted grant from GlaxoSmithKline.