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Immunization is a preventive measure that can protect people against serious diseases. Parents naturally have many questions about vaccines, so we've collected the most common questions and provided up-to-date answers. For more information on immunizations and vaccine safety, please visit www.healthoregon.org/imm.

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines protect people from disease by strengthening a body's immune response. A vaccine's antigens help a body make infection-fighting antibodies to combat disease invaders. Vaccines will make people immune to a disease without having to suffer through that disease.

Are vaccine-preventable diseases still around?

Yes. Many vaccine-preventable diseases, such as smallpox, are no longer around so we have forgotten how horrible they are. But up until the 1960s, parents were terrorized by polio, a devastating disease that struck healthy children and still exists in many parts of the world. With the development of vaccines, children are now protected from diseases that caused thousands of children to die. For example, since 1991 when children started receiving the Hib vaccine that prevents a serious bacterial infection, the rate of Hib-related diseases declined 99 percent, from 20,000 cases per year to approximately 35 cases.

It's been effective and safe.

Are they safe for babies?

Several studies have determined that simultaneous vaccination with multiple vaccines have no adverse effect on a normal child's immune system. Another advantage of multiple immunizations is that children have fewer shots, fewer office visits (1-1722(t)-1(a)-1(d)