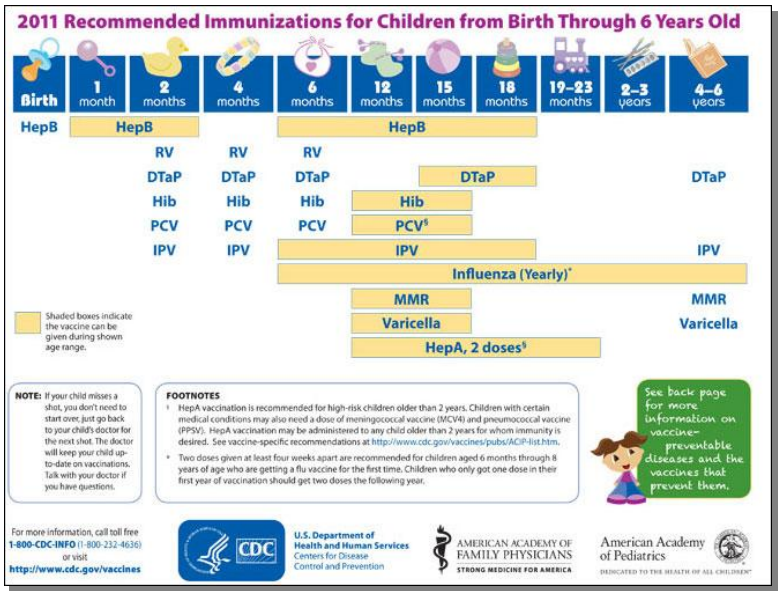
Why Immunizations Are Important

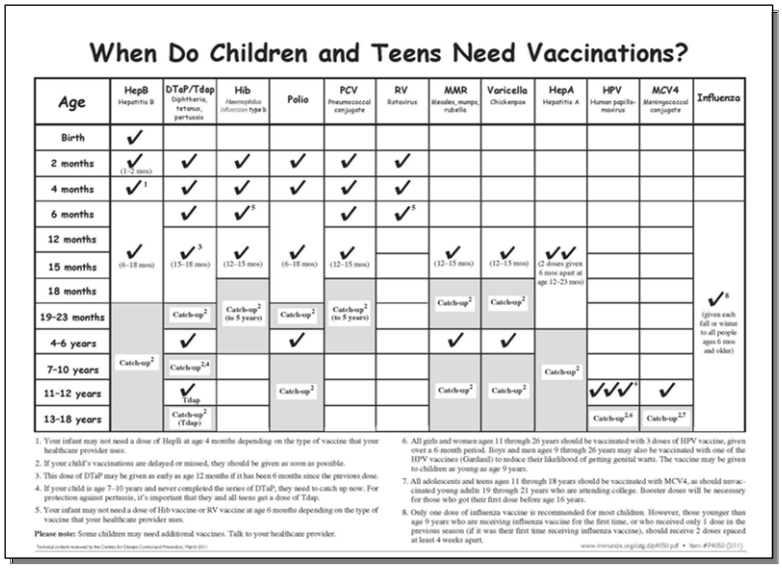
Immunizations are an important part of living a healthy lifestyle. Some diseases are becoming rare in the United States, largely due to vaccinations; however viruses and bacteria continue to circulate in this country. We live in a very mobile society, and over one million people travel into the United States from other countries daily. With this mobility comes the risk of transporting the germs responsible for many preventable diseases. Immunizations are largely responsible for preventing the spread of these infectious diseases, and those that were once an epidemic threat are now reduced to rare occurrences.

The human body is built with an amazing system comprised of organs, glands, fluids and cells that fight foreign germs. This "immune system" is responsible for fighting invading germs called "antigens." When the immune system identifies these antigens, it produces "antibodies," a protein substance that fights them. The normal body produces millions of antibodies daily, fighting the many invaders that attack it. When an antibody identifies and destroys an antigen, it disappears when the job is done; however, the response is usually tattooed on a "memory cell" so the body is armed next time the invader enters the body. This process is called "immunity." With vaccinations, the invader, or antigen, that is introduced to the body is either killed or severely weakened beforehand; therefore, it is not strong enough to cause the disease but is strong enough to produce antibodies. This generally is enough exposure to develop immunity through the production of the memory cells, without causing the disease itself.



Source: http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/spec-grps/infants/images/parent_ver_sch_0_6yrs_view.jpg. Accessed April 11, 2011.

Risks: While the identification of autism is on the rise in this country, there have been no legitimate research studies to validate a correlation between vaccination exposure and the development of autism. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed a committee to assess and evaluate the side effects or negative response to immunizations. The *Immunization Safety Committee* information can be found at www.cdc.gov/vaccines. Immunizations, like medications, may come with some risk of side effects such as low grade fever. Very few people have adverse effects like a severe allergic response, high fever or seizure. People who have compromised immune systems should be mindful of immunization exposure. Consult with your healthcare practitioner for guidance or with questions.



Source: Acquired from http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4050.pdf on April 11, 2011. We thank the Immunization Action Coalition.