# Immunizations: Information for Parents

The diseases that immunizations (vaccines) prevent can be dangerous—even deadly. Vaccines reduce the risk of infection by helping the body’s natural defenses to develop immunity (or resistance) to disease.

When germs, such as bacteria or viruses, invade the body, they attack and multiply, causing an infection. The immune system (our natural system of defenses) has to fight the infection, but once this happens, the fighting cells can remember that infection to fight it in the future. Vaccines help develop these fighting cells by imitating an infection, but this imitation infection doesn’t cause illness. It causes the immune system to have the same fighting response as though it were a real infection, so the body can recognize it and fight it in the future. Some- times, the vaccine can cause minor symptoms, such as fever. These minor symptoms are normal and should be expected as the body builds immunity.

Like any medication, vaccines can cause side effects. The most common side effects are mild (such as redness and swelling where the shot was given) and go away within a few days. If your baby experiences redness, soreness, and swelling where the shot was given, you can ease those

symptoms with a cool, wet cloth. Pay extra attention to your baby for a few days after vaccination. If you see something that concerns you, call your baby’s provider.

While your baby is in the hospital, the neonatal intensive care unit team will follow the vaccine schedule for your baby and make any necessary changes due to your baby being born early. The vaccine recommendations for the first 6 years of life are shown below.

A medicine called Synagis (palivizumab) also will be recommended if your baby was premature and born before 35 weeks to help prevent your baby from getting a respiratory virus called RSV.

The nurses will give you information on the specific shots your baby needs and will explain the possible side effects. They will ask for your written permission before giving your baby any shots.

A vaccine shot schedule and a record of the shots your baby received while in the hospital will be given to you before you go home. Vaccine shot records will be needed for public day care centers and public schools. It’s very



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important that you make routine well-child appointments for your baby to see his or her provider. They will help manage your baby’s vaccines and make sure the shots are given when they are needed. One of the best ways you

can build your baby’s immune system is to follow up and ensure that your baby receives all of the shots and medicines recommended for his or her age.