

The Power of the Immune System



Many parents may question why immunizations are needed at such a young age, and why there are so many. Other parents may believe that vaccines weaken or overload the immune system. What many parents may not know is just how strong infants' and children's immune systems really are.

Why are vaccinations given at such an early age? Newborns are temporarily guarded with antibodies against certain diseases (only those that the mother is immune to), but this protection is short-lived. Once the mother's antibodies wear off, the infant is left with little defense against disease. Vaccines are given to infants to help boost their immune system when it becomes independent of their mother's protection, especially because several diseases can strike at a very early age.

Why do children get so many shots? Because they can! In the past, there was no protection against many of the diseases that vaccines are now available for. Scientists have developed vaccines against more diseases and children are vaccinated to protect them from as many diseases as possible. Several combination vaccines are used to reduce the number of shots that children have to get by providing them with protection against several diseases in a single shot.

Do vaccines weaken or overload the immune system? No. Vaccines are weakened or killed viruses that are so disabled themselves that they cannot weaken the immune system. Scientists have estimated that young infants are capable of responding to about 100,000 different organisms at one time. Therefore, the eleven vaccines required for children only use up about 0.01% of the immune system.