

Don't believe vaccine myths

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(HealthDay)—There's a lot of misinformation about vaccines as the United States begins its massive COVID-19 vaccination program, so an expert wants to dispel the many myths about vaccines in general.

Vaccines are among the most heavily studied of all drugs, and the evidence shows they are safe and extremely effective, according to Dr. Patrick Gavigan, a pediatric infectious disease physician at Penn State Children's Hospital, in Hershey, Penn.

Vaccines don't make you sick.

"Common side effects, such as fever or pain at the injection site, that people often mistake for illness are the immune system's response to the components and actually show the body is building immunity to the virus or bacteria," Gavigan said in a Penn State Health news release.

Vaccines don't contain toxic ingredients.

Mercury and thimerosal, a [mercury](#)-containing organic compound, are no longer used in childhood vaccines or in many other vaccines.

Safety data shows that even when they're present, the compounds pose no increased risk of harm, Gavigan said.

It's not a good idea to space out vaccines or, in the case of COVID-19, delay getting the vaccine until the pandemic is over.

"Any time you space out vaccines, there's a big risk that you're providing additional time when you can contract the disease," Gavigan said.

Getting multiple vaccines at the same time doesn't weaken your immune system's response to them, and there's no need to worry that your body can't handle multiple vaccinations over a short period of time.

"The amount of antigen, or virus protein, in the vaccine is much lower than what you would encounter if you got the infection," Gavigan explained.

As for the new COVID-19 vaccines, the fact that these vaccines have been developed and approved in short order shouldn't make people concerned about their safety.

Gavigan said that the "data has been thoroughly looked at in tens of thousands of people involved in the studies, and the rates of adverse effects were exceedingly low. This vaccine looks to be as safe and effective as we could hope for."

Natural immunity is not better than vaccine-acquired immunity. The risks and consequences of getting sick far outweigh any potential protection that may come from being infected with a virus.

"And with COVID-19, we don't know that immunity from getting the infection is any better than the [vaccine](#)," Gavigan said.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [COVID-19 vaccination](#).

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