

# Ask the Pediatrician: Do children really need all these vaccines?

May 23 2022, by Dr. Whitney Casares, American Academy Of Pediatrics

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**Q:** I read a lot online about vaccines. Do kids really need so many shots?

**A:** Childhood vaccination has been one of modern medicine's biggest

success stories. In fact, vaccines for [children](#) have been so successful that we no longer see many of the diseases that used to cause severe illnesses and lasting disabilities.

Thanks to vaccines, most children will never get whooping cough, tetanus, polio or meningitis—so we rarely see how serious these diseases can be. As a result, parents may wonder if their child needs all of the vaccinations on the recommended immunization schedule. The schedule is approved by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and five other health care organizations. It is based on a review of the most recent scientific data for each [vaccine](#). To be on the recommended schedule, the vaccines must be licensed by the Food and Drug Administration.

Perhaps you've wondered about vaccines and done Google searches. These days, it's easy to search online and find answers that support a belief about the risks of vaccines. But the bulk of these claims are inaccurate and unproven. A lot of this information is not just scary, it has caused parents to second-guess the facts they hear from their pediatrician and other trusted sources. And it scares people away from a vaccine that could save their child's life.

You may be surprised to know that much of the "anti-vaccine" content on social media platforms about kids and vaccines originates from a tiny group of just 12 people. In a 2021 analysis, the Center for Countering Digital Hate found that this tiny group of influencers—it nicknamed the "disinformation dozen"—was the original source of about two-thirds of the anti-vaccine posts and messages. These 12 individuals wanted to draw more traffic to their own websites.

Just like other rumors that go viral on [social media platforms](#), these anti-vaccine posts are not checked for accuracy. They may not be the best or most [accurate information](#) about your baby's vaccines. Here's what else

to keep in mind:

- Social media algorithms promote posts that are likely to appeal to a lot of people, like ones with the most clicks or followers or posts from celebrities.
- When you click on or interact with even one false piece of information, the platform will show you more and more similar kinds of content. This can lead you into a disinformation rabbit hole without you even realizing it.
- The posts seem authentic and convincing. That's why they are so effective at influencing parents who are searching for answers to questions about their child's health. These posts spread easily and get shared by tens of thousands of people who may not even know where the post came from.
- When experts post accurate content, they often get targeted by anti-vaxxers who want to drown out the facts.

For years, people have spread rumors online using a variety of angles, including [rumors](#) about vaccines and [autism spectrum disorder](#), sudden infant death syndrome and developmental delays.

How does this happen? Children with ASD, to use one example, are often diagnosed between 18 and 30 months of age—around the same time the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine is given. This has led some people to assume that the vaccine is the cause. Increasing evidence shows that even though the symptoms of ASD may not be visible until the second year after birth or later, ASD starts before a baby is born.

Extensive evidence from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Academy of Medicine and researchers around the world have concluded that there is no causal association between the MMR vaccine and autism.

Fears of a possible link between MMR vaccine and autism have led to under-vaccinated areas. Measles was declared eliminated in our country in 2000, thanks to vaccination efforts, but the virus still spreads, leading to outbreaks in the United States and around the world.

When reviewing facts about vaccines for your child, make sure you check the source. Have a high level of suspicion if you don't recognize and trust the original source of the content.

And you can always verify information by going to credible sources like HealthyChildren.org, AAP.org, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website and your child's pediatrician.

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