

What is the 'Hug Me!' campaign?

The Hug Me! Campaign is an effort by the Women Thinking Free Foundation (WTFF) to educate new and expecting parents, and the population in general, about the benefits and importance of having themselves and their children vaccinated. We plan to do this through an advocacy campaign we are launching right here at DragonCon! Our leader in this effort is Elyse Anders, a mother of two, who wants to counter the misinformation & pseudoscience being promoted against vaccines by the likes of Jenny McCarthy and others. She is also the president of the Women Thinking Free Foundation, a non-profit organization working to increase awareness of science, critical thinking and skepticism in a world clouded with pseudoscience, homeopathy and psychic predictions.



Please join us in our quest to rid the world of preventable diseases! More information on the Hug Me! Campaign can be found at <http://hugmeimvaccinated.org>

Why should we vaccinate?

Ideally, we vaccinate to protect ourselves and our families from disease. But as an added bonus, our own vaccinations help create "herd immunity" within our community, which helps protect those who cannot be vaccinated, such as tiny infants, those with certain medical conditions, and the elderly. Just as you count on others not to knowingly expose you to diseases, others in turn rely on you to limit their exposure as well.



Additional resources

Herd immunity

SCIENCE-BASED MEDICINE BLOG

<http://www.sciencebasedmedicine.org/?p=516>

Possible side-effects

CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/side-effects.htm>

Thimerisol in vaccines

FOOD AND DRUG ASSOCIATION

<http://www.fda.gov/BiologicsBloodVaccines/SafetyAvailability/VaccineSafety/UCM096228>

Vaccine safety and thimerisol

CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/Concerns/thimerosal/index.html>

Safety of multiple vaccines

CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/Vaccines/multiplevaccines.html>

Special thanks to  **skepchick**
<http://skepchick.org>



WOMEN THINKING FREE
FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 323 • Oswego, IL 60543 • (312) 869-WTFF

<http://www.womenthinkingfree.org>

<http://hugmeimvaccinated.org>

HUG ME!



i'm vaccinated.

Why Hug Me?

Why Vaccinate?

frequently asked questions

<http://hugmeimvaccinated.org>



WOMEN THINKING FREE
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What is herd immunity?

Herd immunity is a living force field against disease! Essentially, herd immunity means that if enough members of the population are vaccinated against a particular disease (roughly 80-95% for most diseases), then the disease will not be able to take hold and spread easily. Herd immunity is vitally important for protecting those members of the population who cannot be fully vaccinated themselves: there are hundreds of thousands of people don't have full immunity because they cannot receive certain vaccinations. This includes young babies who are not yet fully vaccinated, people undergoing chemotherapy, children on steroids for asthma, the elderly, those with weakened immune systems, and those who have allergic reactions to vaccines. These people depend totally on herd immunity, so if there are enough people who decide NOT to vaccinate themselves or their children, then they are actually putting other people's lives at risk.

Are vaccines even necessary?

Yes. Sometimes you'll hear people complain that vaccines aren't even needed because we no longer have outbreaks of measles, mumps, whooping cough (pertussis), polio, and other childhood diseases. But what those critics fail to realize is that we don't witness widespread outbreaks of many preventable diseases as a result of the amazing success of earlier vaccination programs for children! In fact, if you look at parts of the developing world where vaccines are not common, these and other terrible diseases are seen to ravage populations just as it happened in our society over a century ago. We must not let down our guard – these diseases aren't dead, they're simply dormant. If enough people aren't vaccinated within a certain region in the developed world, then these diseases re-emerge to cause localized outbreaks, sometimes with deadly consequences, as has been seen with localized outbreaks of Haemophilus Influenza B and Pertussis.



James Gathany/CDC/Judy Schmidt

Are vaccines safe?

There are risks to vaccinating, but they are extremely rare. For example, some people cannot receive the influenza vaccination because they are allergic to eggs (and the flu vaccine is grown in egg yolk). The vast majority of people have no adverse reactions to vaccinations, and the benefits of vaccinating far outweigh the risks. If you don't worry excessively about getting into a car accident when you drive, you shouldn't worry about vaccinating; the odds of getting into a car wreck are far greater than having adverse reactions to a vaccine.

Should we get so many?

Some parents are concerned that their young children may be getting too many vaccinations at once. As a result, some parents delay vaccinating their children as a middle ground; they think it's a safer and more conservative approach. However, as recent research has shown, there is no danger to having your kids vaccinated on a regular schedule as recommended by your doctor. The number of antigens in the current vaccine series (the parts of the vaccine that your body creates immunity to) is actually smaller than the number in many of the earlier schedules of vaccinations, while at the same time providing protection against more diseases. By sticking with the recommended vaccine schedule, parents ensure that their children are protected as early as possible.

Do vaccines cause autism?

In a word: No. There is no evidence which shows any kind of connection between vaccinations and an increase in rates of autism among children. Many people who are suspicious of vaccines claimed a link between thimerosal (a mercury-based preservative) in vaccines and autism. However, there was no evidence linking exposure to thimerosal with autism; for example, there was no difference in rates of autism between children who got higher or lower doses of thimerosal. Additionally, in 2001 thimerosal was largely removed from childhood vaccines – even after the thimerosal was removed, rates of autism diagnosis actually increased. Had thimerosal in vaccines been a significant cause of autism, autism rates should have plummeted in the years since its removal, but no such drop has occurred. Not only that, but recent research indicates that the spectrum of autistic conditions are largely genetic in nature, with little to no environmental input.

What if I don't vaccinate?

There are many risks to not vaccinating yourself or your children, and they far outweigh the risks of vaccinating. First, if you and your children are not vaccinated on a regular schedule, you put yourselves at risk for infection by a variety of serious & potentially fatal diseases (including measles, pertussis, and polio). In addition, if enough people don't vaccinate, we lose our herd immunity which is vitally important to protecting those who either have not or cannot be vaccinated (such as children too young to be vaccinated or the sick and elderly). In fact, there are a growing number of documented cases of mini-epidemics of diseases are cropping up in communities where large numbers of people are opting out of vaccinating. In some unfortunate cases, these mini-epidemics have led to fatalities. Vaccinating not only protects you and your children, but it also protects your entire community.