

## **IMMUNISATION**

*This is a controversial and at times emotional issue. Most health professionals and the Department of Health, support immunisation as a part of maintaining children's health. There is a clear programme outlining which vaccinations children should have and when. Immunisation is NOT compulsory, although some Child Care Centres may have policies concerning vaccination. (Schools cannot exclude non-vaccinated children, unless there is a current outbreak of that particular condition). The majority of parents go with the 'accepted' viewpoint, that immunisation is a useful and beneficial practice and have their children immunised. However, you should also know that there are a small number of people (parents, some health professionals, natural therapists and others), who have questions about immunisation. Their concerns fall into two categories. Firstly, does immunisation really work and secondly, is it safe?*

*Those who support immunisation maintain that each vaccine prevents, or at least protects children from that disease e.g. Hepatitis, mumps, diphtheria etc. They acknowledge that there are some risks connected with vaccinations, but believe the risks of contacting the diseases (and their possible complications) are greater. They state that decreases in many of these diseases over the years are as the result of the immunisation programme. This group will present statistics and quote research to support their case.*

*Those who have doubts about immunisation maintain that neither the effectiveness nor safety of vaccines have been adequately proven. They claim that many of the diseases vaccinated for, were on the decline before immunisation programmes began and that decreases are a result of improved housing, sanitation, diet and general health, rather than the programmes. They often argue that the side effects of vaccinations are under reported and minimised, and claim that the risks of the disease are exaggerated. They also voice concerns about a general disruption of children's own immune system by vaccines. They will quote statistics and research to support their case.*

*At the very least, you need to read the Department of Health booklet "Childhood Immunisation" (available at Partners In Pregnancy on request), so you know what you are choosing for your baby. Most will choose to follow the more widely accepted practice of immunisation. You will receive a lot of support for this option and this may be the right choice for you and your baby. For those who wish to ask questions or have concerns about immunisation, read as much as you can on the subject (webb sites listed below and your LMC may have more information), ask other parents. You also need to know that if you choose not to vaccinate your child, you will need to understand the issues and be clear about your decisions as others will challenge your decision. Remember that by not vaccinating you are relying on your child's own healthy immune system to protect him or her from disease, so knowing / providing a healthy diet and lifestyle, knowing about natural remedies and other means of supporting you child's immune system, become even more important than usual.*

**Webb Sites:**

[www.moh.govt.nz/immunisationhtml](http://www.moh.govt.nz/immunisationhtml)

[www.healthed.govt.nz](http://www.healthed.govt.nz)

[www.imac.auckland.as.nz](http://www.imac.auckland.as.nz)

[www.ias.org.nz](http://www.ias.org.nz)