

All About Vaccines

About Vaccines

Vaccines work. Immunization has saved the lives of more children than any other medical intervention in the last 50 years.¹ Vaccines are safe, simple and one of the most cost-effective ways to save and improve the lives of children worldwide. However, many children in developing countries lack access to vaccines — often because they live in hard-to-reach communities and are among the most marginalized members of the community. Vaccines ensure that all children, no matter their circumstances, have a shot at a healthy life.

About Vaccine-Preventable Diseases

One in five children lack access to the life-saving immunizations that keep children healthy. In fact, approximately 1.5 million children in developing countries die each year of a preventable disease like pneumonia, diarrhea, measles and polio. Put another way, one child dies every 20 seconds from a disease that could have been prevented by a vaccine.

Coordinated worldwide vaccination efforts have made significant progress, particularly in reducing cases of measles and polio, but funding gaps could threaten these gains. Meanwhile, we now have vaccines that prevent the primary causes of pneumonia and diarrhea, the two leading causes of childhood mortality. Still, one in five children in developing countries does not receive the life-saving immunizations to protect them against measles, pneumonia, diarrhea, and polio.²

MEASLES is one of the most contagious and infectious diseases. It spreads through coughing and sneezing, and 90 percent of unimmunized people who come into contact with an infected person will catch measles. Though treatable in the U.S., the disease can be deadly in places without quality medical care, nutrition or sanitation.

- The Measles & Rubella Initiative has vaccinated more than 1 billion children in 60 countries, reducing measles deaths globally by 74 percent.³
- Despite this progress, measles still kills an estimated 450 people each day — the majority of whom are young children.³

POLIO attacks a child's nervous system and can cause muscle weakness, paralysis or even death.

- Thanks to polio vaccination, five million people who would otherwise be paralyzed are walking and polio cases are down 99 percent.⁴ Never before has the world been this close to eradicating polio.
- However, the disease has recently reemerged in areas that had been polio-free for years. Until permanently eradicated, polio anywhere remains a real threat to children everywhere.
- Polio remains endemic in three countries: Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan. India was removed from this list in January 2012 thanks to the commitment of the Indian government, partners around the world,



Did You Know?

Two of the most common causes of **child death**—pneumonia and diarrhea—can be largely **prevented by existing vaccines.**

The number of **children dying** every year from preventable diseases in developing countries is nearly **equivalent to half the children entering kindergarten** in the U.S.⁵

Expanding **access to vaccines** can **prevent an additional 1.5 million deaths** each year.

and over 2 million community health workers who vaccinated over 172,000,000 Indian children against polio.⁴

PNEUMOCOCCAL DISEASE is a bacterial disease that can cause meningitis and pneumonia.⁶ Preventing the disease through a vaccine is the only way to protect children from it.

- Pneumonia, the most common symptom, accounts for 18 percent of child deaths in developing countries, making it the number one vaccine-preventable cause of death worldwide.⁷
- In 2010 the GAVI Alliance, an international vaccine financing partnership, began a program to introduce pneumococcal vaccinations to more than 40 countries by 2015. Once at full capacity, the program would save 650,000 lives.

ROTAVIRUS is the most common cause of severe diarrhea among infants and young children.

- Each year, more than half a million children under age five die as a result of rotavirus, and almost 2 million more become severely ill.^{8,9}
- In July 2011, Sudan became the first GAVI-eligible African country to roll out the rotavirus vaccine. GAVI will support the introduction of rotavirus vaccine in more than 40 countries by 2015.

About Shot@Life

Shot@Life educates, connects and empowers Americans to champion vaccines as one of the most cost-effective ways to save the lives of children in developing countries. A national call to action for this global cause, the campaign rallies the American public, members of Congress, and civil society partners around the fact that together, we can save a child's life every 20 seconds by expanding access to vaccines. By encouraging Americans to learn about, advocate for, and donate vaccines, the United Nations Foundation's Shot@Life campaign will decrease vaccine-preventable childhood deaths and give children a shot at a healthy life. To learn more, go to ShotatLife.org.

¹ Public Health Agency of Canada (2009). Immunization.

² UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/immunization/index_bigpicture.html, October 2010.

³ Measles Initiative.

⁴ Global Polio Eradication Initiative. Infected Countries.

⁵ U.S. Department of Education, 2007

⁶ UN News Centre. New pneumonia vaccine targets leading cause of child deaths worldwide February 14, 2011.

⁷ Black R, Cousens S, Johnson H, Lawn J, Rudan I, Bassani D, et al (2010). Global, regional, and national causes of child mortality in 2008: a systematic analysis. *The Lancet* 375: 9730.

⁸ Simpson E, Wittet S, Bonilla J, Gamazina K, Cooley L, Winkler JL (2007). Use of formative research in developing a knowledge translation approach to rotavirus vaccine introduction in developing countries. *BMC Public Health* 7: 281.

⁹ *Health Affairs*, http://www.healthaffairs.org/press/2011_06_10.php, June 2011



Did You Know?

Around the world, some moms walk as far as **15 miles to reach life-saving vaccines** for their children.

By scaling-up the delivery of **vaccines in 72 of the world's poorest countries** from 2011-2020, we can **save \$151 billion⁹** through reduced treatment costs and gains in productivity.

In Mexico, diarrhea-related **child deaths decreased by 46%**, following the introduction of the **rotavirus vaccine** in 2006. That represents a **decrease of about 880 deaths per year**.