

## GLOSSARY

**Adverse Event** — A medical problem that occurs after a vaccination, which may or may not have been caused by the vaccine.

**Adverse Reaction** — A medical problem that occurs after a vaccination when it is assumed that the vaccine is the cause.

**Antibody** — A protein produced by the immune system that helps identify and destroy foreign substances that enter the body.

**Antigen** — A substance that causes your immune system to produce antibodies against it. A disease germ, generally a bacterium or virus.

**Bacteremia** — Presence of bacteria in the blood.

**Clinical Trials** — Testing the safety and effectiveness of vaccines before they are licensed, during which they are given to increasingly larger groups of volunteer subjects.

**Communicable Disease** — A disease that can spread from one person to another.

**Convulsion** — See Seizure.

**Encephalitis** — Inflammation of the brain.

**Encephalopathy** — An illness affecting the brain.

**Epidemic** — A large outbreak of disease (see Outbreak). A worldwide epidemic is called a pandemic.

**Exposure** — Contact with germs that cause disease. A person must be both exposed and susceptible to a disease to get sick from it.

**Febrile Seizure** — A seizure caused by a high fever.

**Herd Immunity** — Protection from disease in a community, due to a large enough proportion of the population having immunity to prevent the disease from spreading from person to person.

**Immunity** — Protection from disease. Having antibodies to a disease organism usually gives a person immunity.

**Iron Lung** — A cylindrical steel chamber that “breathes” for a person whose muscles that control breathing have been paralyzed. Some polio patients have been confined to an iron lung for life.

**Local Reaction** — A reaction that is confined to a small area of the body. With vaccines, a local reaction usually refers to redness, soreness, or swelling where an injection was given. (A reaction that affects the body as a whole, such as a fever or bacteremia, is called a “systemic” reaction.)

**Meningitis** — Inflammation of the covering of the brain or spinal cord.

**Outbreak** — An unusually large number of cases of a disease occurring at the same time and place, involving people who got the disease from the same source or from each other.

**Paralysis** — Inability to move the muscles. Paralysis usually occurs in the arms or legs, but any muscle can become paralyzed, including those that control breathing.

**Schedule** (or Vaccination Schedule) — The ages and/or intervals at which vaccines are recommended.

**Seizure** — A spell during which muscles may jerk uncontrollably, or a person stares at nothing. Usually a seizure lasts only a brief time and doesn’t cause permanent harm. A seizure can have many causes, including epilepsy or other brain disorders, or a high fever (see Febrile Seizure). Also called convulsion or fit.

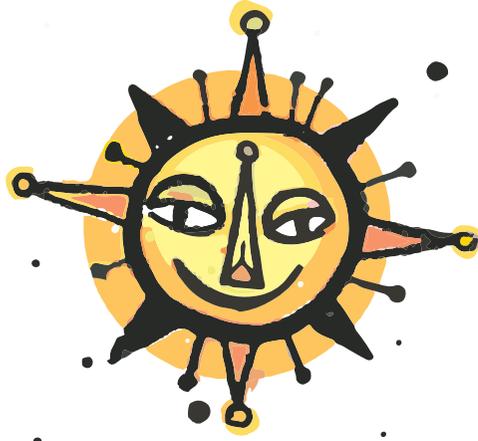
**Susceptible** — Vulnerable to disease. Someone who has never had a disease or has never been vaccinated against it is susceptible to that disease. Opposite of immune.

**Toxin** — Poison.

**Vaccine-Preventable Disease** — Any disease for which there is a vaccine.

## LEARN MORE

- CDC Websites:
  - General vaccine information: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines)
  - Information about hepatitis: [www.cdc.gov/hepatitis](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis)
  - Information about flu: [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)
  - International travel information: [wwwn.cdc.gov/travel](http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel)
  - Information about vaccine safety: [www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety)
- CDC-INFO. Live professionals are available 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Monday through Friday to answer your questions. Call 800-232-4636 (800-CDC-INFO).
- Your state health department's immunization program can answer many questions about immunization in your state. Find your state's immunization website at [www.immunize.org/states](http://www.immunize.org/states).
- There are many books and internet sites devoted to vaccination issues. Keep in mind that these reflect a wide range of interpretation of facts, not to mention personal opinions, making it hard for a parent to know what to believe. Here are a few questions to ask yourself when evaluating a vaccination-related book or website:
  - What are the author's credentials? How well does he or she know the subject?
  - Does the author cite his or her sources? Are the sources reputable?
  - Does information from other sources appear to be edited or taken out of context? Are you directed to the original source?
  - Is personal opinion presented as fact?
  - What are the author's apparent motives?
  - Is the author's tone reasonable? Does the language seem objective, or overly biased or manipulative?



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**Department of Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Disease**

• Live professionals are available to answer your questions about vaccines and vaccine-preventable diseases.

Call 800-232-4636 (800-CDC-INFO).