

## IMMUNISATION - BENEFITS and RISKS

Like most medical procedures, immunisation has benefits and risks. The following are some facts to assist you in your decision about immunisation for your child.

IMMUNISATION BENEFITS	IMMUNISATION RISKS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It achieves a similar effect in the immune system (as having the disease) without the suffering and in some cases the risk of long-term damage or death</li> <li>• The so-called "Natural" process of having the disease involves the painful disease-causing viruses or bacteria, whereas the vaccine uses a harmless form or only part of the harmful form</li> <li>• The immune system cannot be weakened by the disease</li> <li>• The rates of death and complications are much lower than with the disease</li> <li>• If the child does unfortunately contract the disease after vaccination - it will usually be in a milder form</li> <li>• If overall immunisation levels are high enough, epidemics can be prevented - protecting the community as well as the individual</li> <li>• Immunisations are free and designed to be part of a Well Child Check</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common to most vaccines are 'local reactions' of redness at the injection site and sometimes swelling as well</li> <li>• Possible crying and unsettled behaviour (much less likely now with the newer Acellular Pertussis vaccine)</li> <li>• Mild fever</li> <li>• 'Fainting' episodes - very rare and always temporary</li> <li>• Anaphylaxis - an extremely rare allergic reaction (similar to severe allergic reaction to bee stings) NB: Well equipped medical centres and trained vaccinators can safely and effectively deal with emergencies like this.</li> </ul>

In the end, as parents, you have to consider the risks of catching the disease not only for the individual but also for the community in which you live. There are also the possible serious and permanent complications from the disease, including death, and these risks need to be weighed against the possible side effects and effectiveness of the vaccines.

More information about specific diseases and vaccines, including vaccine side effects, is available from your nurse, doctor or public health service.

The Immunisation Advisory Centre (IMAC) can also help you with further information including research papers, fact sheets or recommended books. (Free phone 0800 Immune - 0800 466 863) or visit the website [www.imac.ac.nz](http://www.imac.ac.nz) which has links to many other immunisation related websites.