

## Discuss the importance of immunizing and vaccinating babies and young children.

Immunization and vaccination play a vital role in any child's developmental stage. Immunization and vaccinations are a process used to initiate or augment resistance to infectious diseases. The ultimate goal is to prevent, and in some cases eradicate, potentially serious, life-threatening diseases. They reduce the risk of early childhood infection.

Immunization greatly reduces the number of deaths against diseases. The vaccine itself carries small doses of antigens that activate the immune system of a baby. When the immune system comes in contact with the antigens, it learns how to attack them and remembers what they look like. This allows the body to react quickly and efficiently when faced with the actual disease-causing organism. Immunization is one of the best means to protect against many contagious diseases. Of children who are immunized against diseases, between one in 100,000 is estimated to have a reverse effect, that is, brain damage or any other serious side effect.

The importance of immunization has increased greatly in recent years. With more and more poverty in third-world countries, more and more diseases are being spread through means of touch, physical contact or intercourse. Parents of babies and children are provided with immunization schedules that they have to follow in order to give the right vaccination. Doing so, at an early stage of age will protect the child when he grows up.

However, some parents who may be called 'conservative' or 'orthodox' disapprove of vaccinations. Children who are not immunized run a risk of catching diseases and having complications. Immunization is the safest way to protect your child. Having children immunized at an early age means they are well protected by the time they start playgroups or school where they are in contact with lots of children.

There is no alternative to conventional immunization. Homeopathic medicine has been tried as an alternative to the whooping cough vaccine but it was not effective.

Immunization doesn't just protect your child and your family, it protects the whole community, especially those children who can't be immunized.

By immunizing as many people as possible, fewer people will catch diseases. So the diseases will get rarer and rarer. With effective immunization programmes, some diseases, for example, polio, mumps and measles, will disappear.

