

13 Questions to Ask Your Child's Pediatrician About Vaccines



Before your child's next vaccination, **you deserve full transparency from your pediatrician.** Use these questions to guide that conversation and protect your right to informed consent.

1 Which vaccines does my state actually say are needed for school attendance?

State vaccine requirements for school attendance vary widely and are often broader than what's strictly needed to protect public health. Knowing your state's actual mandates, and what exemptions exist, helps you separate legal requirements from recommendations, and avoid vaccinating solely out of assumption or pressure.

Notes

2 How many vaccines will my child receive by the age of 18 if we follow the CDC schedule and would you consider a delayed schedule?

The CDC schedule has expanded significantly over the past few decades, and many parents aren't aware of the full cumulative total until they see it laid out. Asking about a delayed or alternative schedule opens the door to a real conversation about spacing, timing, and whether your pediatrician is open to individualizing the approach for your child. You have the right to find a pediatrician who shares your values and concerns.

Notes

3 Are vaccines 100% effective?

The CDC and WHO both report that no vaccine offers complete, lifelong protection — effectiveness varies by vaccine, can wane over time, and differs person to person. Understanding these limits helps parents set realistic expectations and know what symptoms to still watch for, even in a fully vaccinated child. Any pediatrician who answers yes should give cause for concern.

Notes

4 In medical school, did you study each vaccine and its possible side effects? How do you keep up to date with this information when new vaccines are introduced or updated?

A 2023 survey found that up to 79% of medical students felt their formal training on vaccines and vaccine hesitancy counseling was insufficient. Asking how your pediatrician fills that gap, through continuing education, journals, or other sources, can tell you a lot about how current and well-rounded their knowledge really is.

Notes

5 Do you read the package insert for each vaccine and make sure you look for updated inserts regularly?

Package inserts contain the manufacturer's own data on ingredients, clinical trial results, contraindications, and reported side effects — information that isn't always covered in standard visits. Asking whether your pediatrician reviews these regularly (including updates) can reveal how closely they track the fine print behind each vaccine they administer.

Notes

6 Do you find any of these vaccine ingredients problematic for young children?

- Aluminum, a developmental toxin
- Animal tissues: pig blood, horse blood, rabbit brain, dog kidney, monkey kidney, chick embryo, chicken egg, duck egg
- Formaldehyde, may be linked to leukemia, according to researchers
- Human diploid cells, derived from human aborted fetal tissue
- Mercury/thimerosal, a developmental toxin, may be linked to autism
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG), may injure brain neurons

Vaccine ingredient lists are rarely discussed at well-child visits, but many parents want to understand what's actually being injected and why. Asking your pediatrician directly can reveal whether they're familiar with these components, can speak to the research behind them, and are willing to discuss any concerns you have about your child's individual sensitivities.

Notes

7 Do you know what VAERS is?

VAERS (Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System) is the national system where healthcare providers and parents can report suspected vaccine side effects. Because it's the first line of defense for catching safety signals, it's worth knowing whether your child's pediatrician recognizes signs of an adverse reaction and is prepared to file a report — rather than dismissing symptoms as unrelated.

Notes

8 Do you believe that adverse reactions happen, know what to look for, and report any adverse reactions to VAERS?

Reported adverse reactions range from mild and common — like fever, fussiness, or soreness at the injection site — to more serious events such as high fever, seizures, persistent crying, allergic reactions, or loss of consciousness. Knowing what's considered a reportable reaction helps parents recognize warning signs early and ensures any concerning symptoms get documented rather than overlooked.

Notes

9 Do you have an understanding of the illness for which you are giving an immunization, and what is the risk today of my child acquiring this illness?

Many vaccines were developed for diseases that are now rare in the U.S., so actual risk of exposure can vary a lot depending on your community and circumstances. Understanding your pediatrician's grasp of both the illness and its current real-world risk helps you weigh the vaccine's benefit against your child's specific likelihood of exposure.

Notes

10 Did you know vaccine manufacturers are free from liability when children are injured or die following vaccination?

Under the 1986 National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act, vaccine manufacturers are shielded from most lawsuits over injuries caused by their products — claims instead go through a separate federal compensation program. Knowing this in advance helps parents understand what recourse (or lack of it) exists if their child is harmed, before agreeing to vaccinate.

Notes

11 Prior to injection, do you look into whether or not there is a family history of auto-immune issues or do testing for the MTHFR genetic polymorphism, which may increase the chances of vaccine injury?

Some research suggests that family history of autoimmune conditions or certain genetic factors, like the MTHFR polymorphism, may make a child more susceptible to vaccine injury. Asking whether your pediatrician screens for these risk factors first can help you make a more personalized decision rather than a one-size-fits-all one.

Notes

12 Are you knowledgeable about the clinical trials for the vaccines you administer and do you know if they have been tested against an inert placebo control?

Many vaccine trials are tested against another active vaccine or an adjuvant-containing solution rather than a true inert (saline) placebo, which can make it harder to isolate the vaccine's actual side effect profile. Asking your pediatrician about the trial design behind each vaccine reveals how much they understand the strength of the safety data they're relying on.

Notes

13 Does your practice receive any financial incentive for having patients follow the CDC vaccination schedule (or the state requirements) and will you allow my child to remain in this practice if we decide not to follow it?

Some insurers and pharmaceutical programs offer pediatric practices bonuses tied to vaccination compliance rates, which can create a financial incentive that isn't always disclosed to parents. Asking directly, and confirming your child won't be dismissed from the practice for a different vaccination choice, helps you gauge whether the advice you're getting is purely medical or shaped by other pressures.

Notes



Tip: Bring this list to your appointment and write down the answers in real time — if your pediatrician is dismissive of your questions or rushes through them, that itself is worth noting as you decide whether this practice is the right fit for your family.