



Vaccination information
for Natives by Natives

Answers to Common Vaccine Questions



For our communities to thrive, it's important that we take care of ourselves and each other. Part of this includes tending to our physical health and staying up to date on our vaccines. This handout offers answers to common questions about vaccines.



“ In a traditional sense, it is our responsibility to take care of ourselves and each other by getting vaccinated. ”

-Gretchen LaDue, Elder and Cowlitz Tribal Member

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines teach our warrior cells – or antibodies – how to fight certain diseases. Then they leave our body.

Do healthy adults need vaccines?

Yes. Our warrior cells need to be taught how to fight certain serious diseases, like cancer, flu, and polio. Without this knowledge, they cannot protect us.

Can I skip certain recommended vaccines?

No. Getting vaccinated protects you *before* you come across dangerous diseases. Skipping vaccines makes it more likely you will get sick and spread illness to others.

Do vaccines make you sick?

No. Vaccines can cause mild side effects – like fever or muscle aches. These are normal and only last a few days. Getting sick with a dangerous disease can be much worse.





“ Our ancestors worked hard to protect our communities from dangerous diseases. Vaccines are an answer to their prayers. ”

– Maleah Nore, Tlingit, Tribal Public Health Professional

Why should I get vaccinated if they aren't 100% effective?

Vaccines' superpower is that they protect us from serious sickness. For example, the COVID vaccine is 90% effective at *preventing sickness*. This is pretty good. But a *huge* benefit of the vaccine is that if you get sick, your symptoms will likely be mild.

Will my body be stronger, or more protected, if I get an illness naturally?

There is *no way* to know for sure how your body will respond to getting sick with a dangerous disease. That's why getting vaccinated is better. Vaccines teach our bodies how to fight disease without the risks of serious sickness.

Are vaccines safe?

Yes. Vaccines go through many safety tests before being approved. Many Native people and Tribes volunteer to help test vaccines. Serious reactions to vaccines are extremely rare.

If I get vaccinated how does this protect my community?

When we are vaccinated, it's less likely that we will get sick. It's also less likely that we will spread illness to others who are more vulnerable - like Elders, young babies, and people with certain health conditions.

What vaccines do I need?

Consider talking to your health provider about what vaccines you need to stay healthy. They will consider your age, health history, and other things.

VacciNative

This handout was developed by VacciNative – a project dedicated to creating accurate vaccine information for Native people by Native people. We do this by gathering info from trusted Elders, Native health professionals, and other experts.

All of our materials are reviewed by the VacciNative Alliance, a collaboration of staff from Tribal Epidemiology Centers across the nation.

Additional Information

For additional information, check out www.IndianCountryECHO.org/VacciNative.

