The health benefits of vaccination

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Vaccines protect people and communities against deadly diseases. They have eradicated smallpox, and virtually eliminated other diseases like polio.

VACCINATION BUILDS UP A PERSON’S DEFENCES TO COMMON DISEASES THAT THEY ARE EXPOSED TO

- Being vaccinated prevents people from catching the disease in the vast majority of cases.
- In some cases, a person can still get a disease after being vaccinated. The symptoms, however, are milder and recovery is faster.

SOME OF THE DISEASES THAT VACCINES PROTECT AGAINST

- Hepatitis B
- Human Papillomavirus Infection (HPV)
- Influenza
- Measles, Mumps and Rubella
- Polio
- Tetanus
- Tuberculosis
A vaccinated person is less likely to pass on an infectious disease to others. So, people who get vaccinated can help protect those who cannot be vaccinated themselves. This includes babies, children, older people and people with weak immune systems such as cancer patients.

These groups benefit from others getting vaccinated, because the disease then cannot spread in the community.

A high number of vaccinations is required to help create this community immunity. When a high number of people are vaccinated, chains of infections are stopped. For example, according to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) 95% of people need to vaccinate against measles to prevent further spread in the community.

By helping keep more people healthy, vaccination helps reduce the social and psychological toll of illness on people and lessens the burden on hospitals and healthcare systems. This means that resources can go to fighting other diseases, such as cancer or Alzheimer’s.
Thanks to vaccination, smallpox has been completely wiped out. It was once a common disease that killed a third of people who contracted it. The last case of naturally contracted smallpox was in 1977 and it was eradicated in 1980.

Polio is an infectious disease mostly contracted by children. 1 person in 200 develops incurable paralysis after infection. A vaccine was developed in 1955 and widely introduced. As of 2020, the only remaining cases of polio have been found in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The measles virus was identified in 1954 and a vaccine was introduced in 1963. Thanks to vaccination, between 2000 and 2018, global deaths from measles fell by 73%. 23 million deaths were prevented. The Americas have been measles-free since 2002. However, outbreaks of measles still occur in several European countries because vaccination coverage is insufficient in certain areas.