

## Concern: My child cannot receive vaccines today based on our religious beliefs.

### **Note for LHD Staff:**

- Religious objections to vaccines are generally based on one of these tenets :
  - An ethical dilemma associated with using human tissue cells to create vaccine
  - The belief that the body is sacred and should not receive certain chemicals, blood or tissues from animals
  - A belief that the body should be healed by God or natural means
- Objection to vaccine for religious reasons may be masking the parent's or guardian's real question regarding safety, which is not a true religious objection. This would be a philosophical objection. However, understanding and acceptance may need to occur in regards to a person's religious beliefs.
- A religion may not necessarily be opposed to vaccines (or western medicine), but the person's religious views are real to them. Each person has the right to practice their beliefs and choose the form of health care they want.
- The key to this conversation is to respect their religious views while informing them of your concerns about vaccine preventable diseases (the risk of disease and benefit of vaccinations). You may want to add in some vaccine preventable disease stories.
- There is some information regarding some religions and their beliefs after "Risk of Disease" (see next page).

### **General Responses on Religion**

- I understand your concern between vaccinating your child and following your religious beliefs, but I am also concerned about the risk to your child. Vaccine preventable diseases are still occurring.
- I have some information regarding your concern about vaccines. We could review your concerns, if that is okay with you.

### **Risk of Disease**

- Some vaccine preventable diseases, like hepatitis A and chickenpox, remain common in the U.S. Without vaccines, your child is at risk for getting seriously ill and suffering pain, disability and even death from these diseases.
- Other diseases prevented by vaccine are no longer common in this country because of vaccines. However, if we stop vaccinating, even the few cases we have in the U.S. could very quickly become tens to hundreds of thousands of cases.
  - In 2008, a total of 140 measles cases was reported, the largest annual total since 1996. Persons younger than 20 years of age accounted for 76% of the cases; 91% were in persons who were unvaccinated (most because of personal or religious beliefs) or of unknown vaccination status.

# Religion

## **Benefit of Vaccination**

- Vaccines can prevent infectious diseases that once killed or harmed many infants, children and adults.
- Vaccines reduce the risk of infection by working with the body's natural defenses to help it safely develop immunity to disease.
- Some diseases that are prevented by vaccines, like pertussis and chickenpox, remain in the United States but other diseases are no longer common in this country primarily due to safe and effective vaccines.
- Remember – If we stopped vaccinating, even the few cases of disease we have in the United States could quickly become thousands of cases.
- A child is far more likely to be seriously injured by a vaccine-preventable disease than by any vaccine.
  - Before the MMR Vaccine, Mumps made approximately 200,000 people sick each year in the U.S.
  - Before the Varicella Vaccine, the U.S. reported:
    - An estimated 4 million cases of chickenpox a year
    - Leading to approximately 11, 000 hospitalizations and 100 deaths
- Vaccines not only protect your family, but also help prevent the spread of these diseases to your friends and loved ones.

## **Information regarding Religions**

Resource found at Immunization Action Coalition

[http://www.immunize.org/journalarticles/conc\\_relig.asp](http://www.immunize.org/journalarticles/conc_relig.asp)

Journal Article: What the World's religions teach, applied to vaccines and immune globulins.  
John D. Grabenstein

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23499565>

## **Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism (linked via ahimsa):**

- Respect for all life, favoring nonviolence.
- Recognize the need to sustain human life, with regretful acceptance of cooking food, boiling water, using antibiotics and vaccines.

## **Judaism:**

- Consider the duty to protect one's children and one's neighbors; do not stand idly by.
- Dietary kosher limitations on medications with porcine components apply to oral administration, but not to injection. Even so, consider the importance of medicine in preserving life.

## **Christianity:**

- Vaccines with remote fetal implications are morally acceptable (with a duty to protect children), unless alternative products are available.
- Jehovah's Witnesses may accept certain blood derivatives, including immune globulins, interferons, coagulation factors, erythropoietin, and others.
- Concern that 'the body is a temple not to be defiled' contrasts with other Scripture passages and modern quality-control requirements for vaccines and immune globulins.

# Religion

## **Christian Science:**

Relationship with Western medicine

It's up to each person who practices Christian Science to choose the form of health care he or she wants. Many Christian Scientists decide to pray first about every challenge - including health issues - and find it effective. Many health care professionals today are recognizing options outside of conventional medicine. Christian Scientists recognize and respect the interests of medical professionals and don't oppose them. We all care about the preventive and curative aspects of health care. Like all systems of healing, the track record for Christian Science isn't perfect. But, over 80,000 Christian Science healings have been published throughout the past 140 years, including severe cases. <http://christianscience.com/>

## **Islam:**

- Consider the law to protect life, the principle of preventing harm (izalat al-dharrar), and the principle of the public interest (maslahat al-ummah).
- Vaccines are intended for important medicinal purpose, not diet.
- Vaccines help protect others.
- Consider the law of necessity, whether alternative vaccines are available.

## **Further resource that reviews religious groups:**

### **Every Child by Two**

Religious Views of Vaccination At-A-Glance

[http://www.vaccinateyourbaby.org/pdfs/religion\\_at\\_a\\_glance.pdf](http://www.vaccinateyourbaby.org/pdfs/religion_at_a_glance.pdf)

## **Response to Concerns about Vaccines Made Using Fetal Tissues**

- Vaccines do not contain fetal tissue, but a few vaccines involve growing the viruses in human cell culture.
- Two cell lines provide the cultures needed to produce vaccines.
- These cell lines were developed from two fetuses in the 1960s.
  - The fetal cells used to grow the vaccine viruses were isolated from two elective abortions (aborted for medical reasons not for the purpose of producing vaccines).
- The fetal cell lines have an indefinite life span, which means that no new aborted fetuses are ever used.
  - The same two cell lines are reproduced and used repeatedly so that no new fetal cells are required in the ongoing production of vaccines.
- Fetal cells are used to make five vaccines: rubella, varicella (chickenpox), hepatitis A, zoster (shingles) and rabies.
- The purpose for using fetal cells:
  - Viruses, unlike bacteria, require cells to grow and human cells are often better than animal cells at supporting the growth of human viruses.
  - Fetal cells are different from other types of cells in that they are virtually immortal, meaning they can reproduce many, many times before dying.
  - Other cells only reproduce a limited number of times before they die.
- This means no fetal tissue is included in the vaccines, so children are not injected with any part of an aborted fetus.

## Religion

- The use of vaccines has been questioned by people whose religious beliefs are against abortions.
  - In 2005, Pope Benedict XVI addressed this question. It was determined that parents who chose not to give vaccines derived from these cells would be in “more proximate cooperation with evil” than those who gave their children the vaccines in question because of the life-saving nature of vaccines.
  - Similarly, the National Catholic Bioethics Center determined that use of vaccines grown in fetal cells isolated from historic abortions was morally acceptable.

### **Response to Concerns about Gelatin**

- Some vaccines contain gelatin as a stabilizer. Stabilizers are added to vaccines to protect the active ingredients from degrading during manufacture, transport and storage.
- A list of vaccines and their ingredients can be found at:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/downloads/appendices/B/excipient-table-2.pdf>
- FluMist does contain hydrolyzed porcine gelatin but there are other flu vaccines available without gelatin. See complete list of vaccines and the ingredients at the link in the previous bullet.
- Gelatin is made from the skin or hooves of pigs. It can alternatively be derived from a bovine source.
- Some religious groups, including Jews, Muslims, and others, follow dietary rules that prohibit pig products.
  - This is concerning to some parents.
- Some religious groups have approved the use of gelatin-containing vaccines for their followers for several reasons:
  - Vaccines are injected, not ingested (the exception to this would be the rotavirus vaccine, which does not contain gelatin).
  - Gelatin in vaccines has been highly purified and hydrolyzed (broken down by water).
    - It is much smaller than that found in nature; therefore, religious leaders believe it to be different enough that it does not break the religious dietary laws.
  - Leaders from these religious groups believe that the benefits of receiving vaccines outweigh adherence to religious dietary laws.
- Religious scholars have determined that the transformation of pork products into gelatin alters them sufficiently to make it permissible for observant Muslims to receive vaccines containing pork gelatin and to take medicine packaged in gelatin capsules.
- According to Jewish laws, there is no problem with porcine or other animal derived ingredients in non-oral products.
  - This includes vaccines.
- Some people are allergic to gelatin.
  - Refer to “Gelatin” under the Waiver Education *Ingredients* handout.

### **Response to Concerns about Fetal Bovine Serum**

- Fetal bovine serum is used in growth media in the production of some vaccines. Because it is a by-product of the process, it is present in miniscule quantities.
- The cells are a source of nutrition, which in some instances may be provided by fetal bovine serum.
- Once the viruses are harvested, they undergo multiple processing and purification steps before the final product is released to the market.

# Religion

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## **Resources** (\*Available in Spanish)

### **Centers for Disease Control (CDC)**

Vaccine Excipients and Media Summary

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/downloads/appendices/B/excipient-table-2.pdf>

Website - Common Immunization Questions

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/common-faqs.htm>

### **Food and Drug Administration**

<http://www.fda.gov/BiologicsBloodVaccines/SafetyAvailability/VaccineSafety/ucm187810.htm>

### **Children's Hospital of Philadelphia**

\*Vaccine Ingredients - what you should know

<http://vec.chop.edu/export/download/pdfs/articles/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-ingredients.pdf>

### **Immunization Action Coalition**

Website - IAC's Vaccine Concerns

Religious and Ethical Concerns Resources

<http://www.immunize.org/concerns/religious.asp>

Facts about Childhood Vaccine Ingredients

[http://www.immunize.org/concerns/vaccine\\_components.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/concerns/vaccine_components.pdf)

### **American Academy of Pediatrics**

Questions and Answers about Vaccine Ingredients

<http://www2.aap.org/immunization/families/faq/Vaccineingredients.pdf>

### **Every Child by Two**

Religious Views of Vaccination At-A-Glance

[http://www.vaccinateyourbaby.org/pdfs/religion\\_at\\_a\\_glance.pdf](http://www.vaccinateyourbaby.org/pdfs/religion_at_a_glance.pdf)

### **Specific Resources on Fetal Tissue:**

#### **Letter from Vatican**

<http://www.immunize.org/concerns/vaticandocument.htm>

#### **Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith**

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20081208\\_dignitas-personae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20081208_dignitas-personae_en.html)

# Religion

Website - Christian Medical and Dental Associated

## **Immunization Ethics Statement**

<http://www.cmda.org/resources/publication/immunization-ethics-statement>

Website - Catholic News Service

## **Vatican: Parent may allow kids to get vaccines linked to abortion**

<http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0806245.htm>

Institute for Vaccines

## **Moral Reflections on Vaccines Prepared From Cells Derived From Aborted Human Foetuses**

[http://www.lifeissues.net/writers/doc/doc\\_40vaccinesfoetuses.html](http://www.lifeissues.net/writers/doc/doc_40vaccinesfoetuses.html)

## **Consenting to vaccination for Rubella**

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/laws/rubella-cathnews.html>

## **Specific Resources on Gelatin**

### **WHO**

Statement from the Seminar held by the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences Concerning the Use of Pork Gelatin

<http://www.immunize.org/concerns/porcine.pdf>

### **UK National Health Services**

Statement from Rabbi Alder Concerning the Use of Porcine and Animal Products in Vaccines

[http://www.immunize.org/concerns/concerns\\_observant\\_Jews.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/concerns/concerns_observant_Jews.pdf)

Institute for Vaccine Safety

<http://www.vaccinesafety.edu/Porcine-vaccineapproval.htm>

## **Specific Resources on Bovine**

### **UK National Health Services**

Statement from Rabbi Alder Concerning the Use of Porcine and Animal Products in Vaccines

[http://www.immunize.org/concerns/concerns\\_observant\\_Jews.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/concerns/concerns_observant_Jews.pdf)

## **Food and Drug Administration**

<http://www.fda.gov/BiologicsBloodVaccines/SafetyAvailability/ucm111476.htm>

## **LHD resource**

BMC Health Services Research

How healthcare professionals respond to parents with religious objection to Vaccination: a qualitative study

<http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/pdf/1472-6963-12-231.pdf>