Messages to Address Concerns about Vaccines

building a healthier community
Shasta County Public Health

Concern: Too Many Vaccines
A common belief among parents who request PBEs is that children get too many vaccines at the same time.

- Vaccines are a small drop in the bucket compared to what an infant's immune systems face every day.
- In addition, vaccines have been refined over time and are now more effective while containing fewer antigens.

Concern: Vaccine Additives
One reason parents cited for requesting PBEs is that vaccines contain unsafe toxins.

- Everything that's in a vaccine is there for a very good reason, is in a minute amount, and is not harmful.
- Aluminum enhances our immune response to the vaccine. Aluminum is also found in formula and breast milk
- Thimerosal was removed from pediatric vaccines in 2001

Concern: Autism
One-third of parents with PBEs believe vaccines can cause autism.

- Over 20 scientific studies have researched hundreds of thousands of children and found no connection between vaccines and autism.
- There have been no large scale conclusive studies demonstrating that autism rates differ among vaccinated vs. unvaccinated children.
- The study that first suggested the link in 1998 was retracted by the journal and 10 of its authors.

Concern: Natural Immunity
Only a small percentage of children with PBEs had the varicella vaccine. Many parents with PBEs prefer that their children get chicken pox than receive the chicken pox vaccine.

- Vaccine immunity is natural immunity. Building immunity from getting diseases can be dangerous.
- Before the chicken pox vaccine, almost 11,000 Americans were hospitalized and over 100 died each year from chickenpox.
- Vaccinating your child protects all members of the community, including those too young and vulnerable to be vaccinated themselves.

Concern: Low Perceived Risk

A reason for refusing or delaying vaccines is the perception of low risk of some vaccine-preventable diseases.

- In the age of globalization, even diseases that are rare in the U.S., like measles, Hepatitis B and Polio, are just a plane ride away.
- U.S. rates of many vaccine-preventable diseases are low because immunization rates are high.

Concern: Preference for Alternative Schedule

We see that most parents with PBEs are not refusing all vaccines but rather choosing an alternative vaccine schedule.

- One third of parents with PBEs are delaying MMR, while we have seen measles outbreaks in California in the past decade.
- The recommended schedule is fully supported by research. However, alternative vaccine schedules are not rigorously tested and may unnecessarily leave children susceptible to vaccine-preventable diseases.

Concern: Big Pharma
Several vaccine-hesitant parents express concern that doctors and pharmaceutical companies are making a profit on immunizations.

- The vaccine recommendations are set by a transparent process supported by scientific evidence.
- The recommended schedule is not influenced by pharmaceutical companies. Vaccines only represent a small fraction of the pharmaceutical industry.
- Healthcare practitioners encourage vaccination because it is the best way to prevent infectious diseases. It may be comforting to know that most doctors do not profit from administering vaccines.