



*St. Vincent
Physician Network*

American Academy of Pediatrics: Children should be vaccinated!

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IOM REPORT ON VACCINES SHOULD REASSURE PARENTS
Children should be vaccinated

For Release: October 1, 2001, 1:00 p.m. (ET)

Washington, D.C.--A vaccine safety report issued today by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) contains findings and recommendations consistent with those of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). No evidence currently exists that proves a link between thimerosal-containing vaccines and autism, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and speech and language delay.

"Parents should be reassured about the safety of vaccines," AAP President Elect Louis Z. Cooper, M.D., said. "Children should be immunized according to the recommended age-appropriate schedule."

Like the IOM, the AAP has recommended that pediatricians administer thimerosal-free vaccines, but if only vaccines containing thimerosal are available, the vaccine should be given rather than risk acquiring a potentially life-threatening disease. If parents have any questions or concerns, they should talk to their pediatrician.

Thimerosal is a mercury-containing compound that has been used as a preservative in vaccines since the 1930s to prevent contamination of multidose vials. High levels of mercury are known to be toxic to the nervous system and other tissues.

In 1999, a Food and Drug Administration review noted that with the increased number of vaccines then recommended for infants, the total amount of mercury in vaccines containing thimerosal might exceed levels recommended by one of three federal agencies. Although the mercury limits imposed by each of these agencies built in a wide margin of safety and there was no information suggesting that any infant had been harmed, the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) and the AAP jointly issued precautionary recommendations in July 1999. These called on clinicians to minimize exposure of infants and children to thimerosal-containing vaccines.

The AAP and PHS also urged manufacturers to remove thimerosal from vaccines as soon as possible and they have done so. Now children in the United States can receive the full array of routinely recommended vaccines, all of them thimerosal-free.

The IOM committee emphasized both the remarkable value of vaccines in disease prevention and the importance of public trust in vaccine safety. The committee made strong recommendations for expanded public health and biomedical research to assure that public trust is based on sound science. It also pointed out the need for better communication with the public and health professionals related to rapid changes in vaccine policy.

The AAP, representing 55,000 pediatricians who deliver most of the vaccines for America's children, supports the recommendations on research and takes seriously its responsibility for helping pediatricians and parents with up-to-date information to ensure that all children receive the health benefits of safe and effective vaccines.

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 55,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.