



Background Guide for UNICEF

# Anti-Vaccination Sentiments:

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One of the most successful interventions in the history of medicine, vaccination led to the global eradication of smallpox, the nearly global eradication of polio, and the drastic decrease in the morbidity and mortality associated with other infectious diseases. As a result of this success, many parents are unaware of the threats and burden that infectious diseases posed for previous generations. To a great extent, this explains that vaccines have become *victims of their own success*.

## ***The arguments raised against vaccination are summarized below:***

- Vaccines are “toxic” and contain antifreeze, mercury, ether, aluminium, human aborted fetal tissue, antibiotics, and other dangerous chemicals that can lead to autism and an assortment of chronic health conditions. Slogan: “Green our Vaccines”.
- A child’s immune system is too immature to handle vaccines; they are given “too many, too soon” and the immune system becomes “overwhelmed,” leading to autism and an assortment of chronic health conditions.
- “Natural immunity is better;” most vaccine-preventable diseases are harmless to most children, and natural exposure provides more long-lasting immunity. eg, “I had the chickenpox as a kid and I was just fine.” Some individuals may also have the mistaken belief that all “natural” infections confer life-long immunity, whereas all vaccine-derived immunity is short-lived.
- Vaccines have never been tested in a true “vaccinated versus unvaccinated” study; the vaccines in the current schedule have never been tested collectively.
- Diseases declined on their own due to improved hygiene and sanitation; “vaccines didn’t save us.”
- Vaccines “shed” (can be transmitted by vaccinated individuals to others); therefore, cases of vaccine-preventable diseases in the population are driven by the vaccinated, not the unvaccinated.

Vaccination is opposed due to various factors such as illiteracy, religious beliefs and areas of distrust on medical science.

### ***How it began?***

The protest against vaccination began in the early 1800s following Edward Jenner's cowpox experiments, in which he showed that he could protect a child from smallpox. This vaccination induced fear and protest amongst parents. For other anti-vaccinators, their discontent with the smallpox vaccine reflected their general distrust in medicine and in Jenner's ideas about disease spread.

The smallpox vaccine played an important role in controlling smallpox rates in Europe and America. It was not until 1958 that the World Health Assembly (WHA) passed a global smallpox eradication resolution.

The last cases of naturally occurring smallpox were detected in Ethiopia and Sudan between 1976 and 1977, after which continental Africa successfully concluded a centuries-long battle with smallpox.

### **The Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis (DTP) Vaccine Controversy:**

Anti-vaccination positions and vaccination controversies are not limited to the past. In the mid-1970s, an international controversy over the safety of the DTP immunization erupted in Europe, Asia, Australia, and North America.

In the UK, opposition resulted in response to a report from the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children in London, alleging that 36 children suffered neurological conditions following DTP immunization. Television documentaries and newspaper reports drew public attention to the controversy. An advocacy group, The Association of Parents of Vaccine Damaged Children (APVDC), also piqued public interest in the potential risks and consequences of DTP.

In response to decreased vaccination rates and three major epidemics of whooping cough (pertussis), the Joint Commission on Vaccination and

Immunization (JCVI), an independent expert advisory committee in the UK, confirmed the safety of the immunization.

## ***Why governments encourage vaccination?***

Immunity from disease develops as a result of sickness or vaccines, which are killed or weakened versions of the disease that spur our immune systems to produce a defence against the real thing. Yet, there's a hitch when it comes to vaccines because most vaccines are partially protective but not fully protective.

For this reason, in some of US outbreaks of measles or mumps -- which at least 90% of the population has been vaccinated against since 2000 -- the people who get sick are usually those who have not been immunized. Still, even some people who have been vaccinated have become sick during an outbreak.

A policy in France requires all children to receive 11 mandatory vaccines against diphtheria, tetanus and poliomyelitis have always been mandatory in France, while eight -- including whooping cough, hepatitis B, measles, mumps and rubella -- had been recommended.

Though European vaccination rates are high overall, measles continues to spread where vaccination rates have declined, the World Health Organization warned in 2016. Measles is a viral disease that can lead to complications including pneumonia and encephalitis.

The majority of measles cases in Italy, 89%, were among unvaccinated people, and 6% of infections affected people who received only one dose of vaccine, according to a report from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

Given the changing trends regarding increased vaccine hesitancy and refusal and consequent disease outbreaks, some countries such as Italy are introducing more mandates.

To address the spread of measles, Italy is essentially following the lead of the United States, which requires vaccination for school attendance. The Italian requirements, though, incorporate a few twists. Going forward,

parents will provide proof of vaccination when enrolling their children in government-run nurseries or preschools, just as is done in the United States. But in Italy, the parents of children who have not been vaccinated will be fined. Conscientious objection, unlike in the United States, will not be allowed.

Germany introduced legislation in June that made it mandatory for all kindergartens to notify the health authority if parents haven't submitted proof of vaccination counselling for their children.

Like the United States, Australia mandates that child-care centres and preschool facilities can permit only children with up-to-date immunizations to attend, Barton said.

However, there is a small proportion, roughly 1-2%, which refuse still to vaccinate, often misled by information on websites or various active lobby groups. This problem occurs because unvaccinated people tend to cluster in certain locations. This can decrease vaccination rates in some locations to below the necessary herd immunity percentage.

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## ***Limitations to Medical Treatment due to Religion:***

Religious beliefs restrict medical care that may result in fatality.

### *Jehovah's Witness:*

*Just be firmly resolved not to eat the blood, because the blood is the life, and you must not eat the life with the flesh. - Deuteronomy 12:23*

That's just one of several Old and New Testament scriptures used by Jehovah's Witnesses to explain why their religion refuses to accept blood transfusions.

### *The Amish:*

The Amish will not allow heart transplants and, in some cases, heart surgery because they view the heart as "the soul of the body." Children who have not been baptized are exempt from that restriction.

### *Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims:*

Vaishnavism, the major branch of the Hindu faith, considers the killing of animals, especially cows, to be sinful. Therefore, the religion does not condone the use of any drugs, implants, skin grafts or medical dressings that contain parts of pigs or bovines.

Sikhs also disapprove of any animal-based products for medical use. But both religions allow for exceptions in cases of emergency or when no other options are available.

Muslims also do not approve of any drugs, medical dressings or implants that contain porcine ingredients. But they too allow exceptions for emergencies and when no alternative drugs or materials are available.

### *Christian Scientists:*

Christian Scientists believe that the primary method of healing should be through prayer, and many members have in the past been against modern medical treatments. There have been measles outbreaks among Christian Scientists, and studies have shown that mortality levels were high.

Between 1980 and 1990, there were seven cases in which Christian Science parents were charged with failing to provide adequate medical care for their children.