

## When A Small Cry is Worth it

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*The National Coalition for Infant Health is a collaborative of more than 200 professional, clinical, community health, and family support organizations focused on improving the lives of premature infants through age two and their families. NCfIH's mission is to promote lifelong clinical, health, education, and supportive services needed by premature infants and their families. NCfIH prioritizes safety of this vulnerable population and access to approved therapies.*

No parent wants to see their child wince in pain or hear their baby cry. Yet enduring the undesirable for just a minute – as the child is vaccinated – can save heartache down the road.

Most newborns receive their first vaccine before leaving the hos-

pital. Then, they get a series of shots at well-child visits over the next few years.

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## Vaccines Are Still Needed

Some parents think their child doesn't need vaccine protection from less common diseases. "My child is at low risk because there's not much of that disease around," they think. But "out of sight, out of mind" is a dangerous mentality, especially when it comes to preventing disease.

After all, the uncommon vaccine-preventable diseases became uncommon because of widespread vaccination.

But when vaccines lag, outbreaks can occur. That is what happened with the measles in 2014 and again in 2018. In 2014, the first cases were detected in California, but more than 660 people in 16 states, Mexico and Canada, ended up getting sick. Nearly 350 people were infected in the 2018 outbreak. Even though measles had been considered eliminated, experts warned outbreaks could become more common if vaccination rates continue to decline.

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## Overcoming Hesitancy

Hesitation about vaccinating children also arose during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Questions about the development of new COVID-19 vaccines fueled broader mistrust about vaccine safety – even for shots that have been effectively used for decades. That concern has led some parents to question if they want their children to get any vaccines.

This is particularly alarming because pandemic disruptions caused millions of young children worldwide to fall behind on routine vaccines. Aside from being exposed to preventable illnesses, unvaccinated children can also encounter delays getting into school. Most districts require kids to be up to date on immunizations before enrolling in elementary school. Most colleges and universities have a similar requirements.

## Making Up Missed Shots

This National Infant Immunization Week – April 24-30 – is more important than ever. Even though the week emphasizes vaccinations for infants, parents need to know that it is not too late to get their children – no matter the age – caught up on missed shots.

Parents who have questions should consult their health care provider, county health department, or a reputable internet source, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Getting fully vaccinated is a series of small actions that yield a huge benefit – for the individual and the greater community. Skipping shots is not worth the risk.

*Disclosure: No relevant disclosures noted*

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## National Coalition for Infant Health Values (SANE)

**Safety.** Premature infants are born vulnerable. Products, treatments and related public policies should prioritize these fragile infants' safety.

**Access.** Budget-driven health care policies should not preclude premature infants' access to preventative or necessary therapies.

**Nutrition.** Proper nutrition and full access to health care keep premature infants healthy after discharge from the NICU.

**Equality.** Prematurity and related vulnerabilities disproportionately impact minority and economically disadvantaged families. Restrictions on care and treatment should not worsen inherent disparities.