

Why Vaccines Work: Everyday Examples You Already Know

1. Vaccines Are Like Seat Belts

Seat Belt Example: You may never be in a car accident, but you still buckle up every time. Why? Because if something unexpected happens, a seat belt can save your life.

Vaccine Explanation: You may never get seriously sick from a disease, but if you do, vaccines give your body a strong defense—reducing the risk of severe illness or death.

2. Vaccines Are Like Smoke Detectors

Smoke Detector Example: Most days, your smoke detector is silent. But when there's smoke, it alerts you before things get out of control.

Vaccine Explanation: Vaccines prepare your immune system to recognize “smoke signals” from germs. If you're exposed, your body reacts quickly—before things get serious.

3. Vaccines Are Like Phone Updates

Phone Update Example: You update your phone to patch vulnerabilities and stay protected against new bugs.

Vaccine Explanation: Vaccines update your immune system with the latest “software,” so it knows how to fight off diseases — sometimes with booster “updates.”



What Vaccines Really Do

- **Teach** your immune system to recognize harmful germs.
- **Reduce** the chances of severe illness, hospitalization, or death.
- **Protect** not only you, but also the people around you.

Common Misunderstandings

“I never get sick, so I don't need a vaccine.”

Just like you wouldn't skip wearing a seat belt because you've never had a crash, skipping vaccines leaves you unprotected if something unexpected happens.

Vaccines also protect the vulnerable. Some people (like newborns or cancer patients) can't get certain vaccines. When you're vaccinated, you help shield them too.

“I'm healthy, so I don't need vaccines.”

Even healthy people can get sick and spread germs to babies, older adults, or people with weak immune systems. Vaccines protect you and those around you.

“Natural immunity is better.”

Catching the real disease can make you very sick. Vaccines give your body safe protection without the dangerous illness.

Disclaimer: The information provided in this document is for general educational purposes only. It is not intended as medical advice for individual situations. For personal health questions, please consult a qualified healthcare provider. (Adapted from research and recommendations through the University of Minnesota's Vaccine Integrity Project. Find out more at www.cidrap.umn.edu/vaccine-integrity-project) **References:** Geoghegan, S., O'Callaghan, K., & Offit, P. (2020). Vaccine Safety: Myths and Misinformation. *Frontiers in Microbiology*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmicb.2020.00372>. Gidengil, C., Goetz, M., Newberry, S., Maglione, M., Hall, O., Larkin, J., Motala, A., & Hempel, S. (2021). Safety of vaccines used for routine immunization in the United States: An updated systematic review and meta-analysis. *Vaccine*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2021.03.079>.