

Thimerosal Fact Sheet

What Is Thimerosal?

- It is a preservative used in 30 types of vaccines for 60 years.
- Used in multi-dose vials, it prevents bacterial and fungal contamination.
- It contains ethylmercury, which is different from methylmercury found in some fish (swordfish, tuna). Ethylmercury is probably less toxic and cleared faster from the body than methylmercury.

Do Childhood Vaccines in Maine Contain Thimerosal?

- Currently, all recommended vaccines for young children from the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) do not contain thimerosal.

When Did Thimerosal Come to National Attention and What Did Maine Do?

- In 1999, when the presence of thimerosal in vaccines was highlighted in a report by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Maine Bureau of Health (now Maine CDC) moved quickly to assure that all childhood vaccines they provided were thimerosal-free whenever possible.
- Since 2002, all recommended childhood vaccines have been thimerosal-free except for influenza vaccine. However, in the last several flu seasons, the Maine CDC has provided some thimerosal-free influenza vaccines for young children and pregnant women.

Is Thimerosal Used In Any Vaccines?

- Some vaccines that are primarily for older children and adults are not available without thimerosal.
- Thimerosal-containing vaccines may be used in other situations where multi-dose vials are needed.

Is there Thimerosal in the new H1N1 influenza vaccine?

- At this time many different manufacturers are producing H1N1 vaccine. The majority of vaccine will be in multi-dose vials, the remainder in single dose syringes or nasal sprayers. Single dose syringes and nasal sprayers will be thimerosal-free. The aim is to have enough vaccine in single dose syringes for young children and pregnant women.

Is Thimerosal Associated with Autism?

- Between 2003 and 2008, ten studies from Canada, Denmark, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States show no association between thimerosal in vaccines and neuropsychological developmental disorders, including autism.
- A report by the Institute of Medicine, an independent research organization with the National Academy of Sciences, concluded that thimerosal does not cause autism.

Where Can I Find Additional Information?

- Thimerosal content of vaccines: <http://www.fda.gov/cber/vaccine/thimerosal.htm#t1>
- Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention: www.mainepublichealth.gov
- Federal CDC: www.cdc.gov
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration: www.fda.gov

**There are no known long-term risks of thimerosal when given in vaccine,
but there are very known risks of not vaccinating.**

Maine Department of Health and Human Services

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)

If you have further concerns or comments, please call the Maine Immunization Program at 1-800-867-4775

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