

## Making Informed Choices about Vaccinations

The effects of some vaccines on the autoimmune system can be far greater than the adverse effects of the infectious disease itself. For example, live oral polio vaccines have been shown to induce polio at a rate of 0.2 cases per 100,000. This has caused some countries, including the U.S. to immunize with a killed polio vaccine instead of the live vaccine.

In the case of the hemophilus influenza vaccine, immunization may only prevent 30 to 36 cases of meningitis per 100,000 while it may cause a rise in the incidence of insulin-dependent diabetes in children (i.e., 200 cases per 100,000). On one hand, the vaccine is helping a small number of potential meningitis cases, but on the other, is contributing to a chronic disease for which there is currently no cure. In this case, the benefit does not outweigh the risk.

The Ministry of Health in France recently announced the suspension of routine hepatitis B immunizations of school age children in France. Routine Hepatitis B immunizations given at birth would continue. The reason for this decision was the increased risk of autoimmune diseases associated with the vaccine when it is given to school age children as compared to newborns.

Immunologist John B. Classen, M.D. originally published papers linking the hepatitis B and other vaccines to the development of insulin dependent diabetes, an autoimmune disease. At that time certain public health officials attempted to deny an association between auto-immunity and immunization; however, two recently published U.S. government studies have supported the association. One study linked hepatitis B immunization to an autoimmune form of hair loss. Another small study showed that when hepatitis B immunization was given at two months and older, it was associated with a near doubling of the risk of diabetes.

"The French decision to continue hepatitis B immunization at birth while discontinuing immunization starting at school age suggests the French Ministry of Health may believe that timing of immunization has a role on the development of auto-immunity. They appear to be accepting our findings." Dr. Classen is referring to his numerous publications indicating immunizations given at birth are associated with lower risks of auto-immunity than immunization given later in life.

Long-term safety studies are typically not performed on vaccines prior to them attaining government approval. "Without these studies we can not be sure that the benefits of immunization exceed the risks of and thus we should not mandate the hepatitis B or other vaccines," adds Classen.

For more information about polio, hepatitis B, influenza vaccine safety visit the Vaccine Safety Web site at [www.vaccines.net](http://www.vaccines.net).