

## 1. The importance of immunizations to prevent diseases and new vaccine introduction

### Key Messages

- While vaccination protects most children, the vaccine-preventable diseases still exist.
- Once parents stop vaccinating their children, or they delay vaccination, we have seen time after time that the diseases come back.
- If not immunized – or if immunized only once or twice with vaccines that need to be given three times – your child’s body is not fully protected from these diseases.
- Parents who fully vaccinate their children and vaccinate them on time help protect their children and all the other children around them.
- From time to time new vaccines are introduced to protect from additional diseases. We are fortunate that we are able to protect our children with the help of these new vaccines. Parents may have questions about the new vaccines. Take the time to explain to parents the importance and safety of each new vaccine.

### Corresponding FAQs

- *# 1: Aren’t childhood diseases part of the normal process of a child’s development? Why should I interfere by having the baby immunized?*
- *# 2: I haven’t seen these diseases you are talking about. Why should I vaccinate my child against something that doesn’t affect people here?*
- *# 3: Now that most of the old diseases are under control, don’t I put my child at unnecessary risk by vaccinating him/her?*
- *# 4: What happens if I don’t immunize my child?*
- *# 15: Why does my baby need so many vaccines?*
- *# 16: Why does my baby need so many vaccines at once?*
- *# 22: I have heard that some children get diseases that they have supposedly been immunized against. How can this be true?*
- *# 23: Isn’t natural infection better than immunization?*

### Characters:

Supervisor

**Simon**

FLW

**Maya**

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**Narrator:** Welcome to the first Audio Job Aid! You will soon hear a conversation between a frontline worker, Maya, and her supervisor, Simon. Simon is helping Maya prepare to talk with caregivers about a new vaccine that is being introduced and help them understand the importance of immunization. While you are listening, try to think of how you might respond to Maya or what you would say to caregivers when promoting a new vaccine. Let's listen...

**Simon:** Hello Maya, what brings you to my office today? Are you settling well into your new position?

**Maya:** I've been doing well. I am enjoying my new role as a frontline worker and I appreciate how welcoming everyone has been towards me – my last supervisor didn't have an open door policy like you!

**Simon:** I'm happy to hear that. I try to do whatever I can to support you and the other frontline workers to learn and grow. In fact, we have just launched a new vaccine, so your help will be really appreciated in administering the vaccine and explaining it to caregivers. This is also a great opportunity for you to learn.

**Maya:** Yes! I'm really looking forward to learning and helping. In fact, I came to see you about that new vaccine. I am a bit concerned about how parents are going to react when we tell them that their child has to get another vaccine. So I was wondering if you could help me prepare to respond to parents who have these concerns...

**Simon:** I'm sure you will do well during your outreach, but I would be very happy to help you prepare. Let's see where to start... Well, one of the things parents often ask is what purpose immunization serves if children still get sick even when they are vaccinated. The best way to respond to this question is to remind them that childhood illness may be common, but fortunately we have vaccines to prevent a number of **serious and sometimes deadly diseases**.

**Maya:** Do you have any specific examples that I can share with parents?

**Simon:** Sure! For example, severe cases of measles can kill many children who develop pneumonia or severe diarrhea and dehydration. In other cases, measles causes permanent damage in the form of deafness or lifelong brain defects. But now, thanks to the measles vaccine, most children are protected from these serious effects of measles.

**Maya:** We are fortunate to live in a time when vaccines can protect children from preventable death, disability or serious illness. I also like to remind parents that fully immunizing children actually gives them a better chance to survive childhood and develop fully.

**Simon:** Exactly! In your immunization sessions or home visits, you may notice that a lot of parents haven't heard of the diseases that we want to vaccinate against. So they may not realize that their child could be at risk for these diseases. Either that or they think a disease that used to exist in the past no longer exists because they have not heard of or seen cases lately.

**Maya:** Can you suggest how I can respond to those concerns?

**Simon:** You can start by explaining that while vaccines have been very effective, most of the diseases they prevent still exist and have been known to come back time when enough parents fail to immunize their children.

**Maya:** How is it possible for a disease to return?

**Simon:** Sometimes the bacteria or viruses that cause a disease remain in the environment. Other times people from areas where the disease still exists may bring them into the community. When they do, people are exposed and if they're not immunized, they may

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become infected with the disease. But in communities where all children are fully immunized, the children will be protected if a disease tries to return, and they will fortunately never see the devastating effects of many serious diseases.

**Maya:** So, what you're saying is that caregivers who fully vaccinate their children and vaccinate them on time help protect their own children as well as other children around them.

**Simon:** That's correct. What other concerns do you think parents have?

**Maya:** Well, I think many caregivers will have questions about the new vaccine and why their children need yet another one.

**Simon:** I think you're right, Maya, there might be some concern about giving their child a new vaccine. After you have clearly explained what disease the vaccine protects against, find out if caregivers have any concerns, and if so, what specifically they are concerned about.

**Maya:** I think they may be concerned about safety of a new vaccine... what is the best way to reassure them that the new vaccine is safe and effective?

**Simon:** That's a common concern... you can assure them that new vaccines have to go through many rounds of testing for safety and effectiveness before they can be given to the general population. Others might be worried about adding yet another vaccine. For them, you can explain that the schedule and combination of vaccines have also been tested thoroughly to ensure that they are safe for children and will protect them from maximum number of diseases.

**Maya:** Yes, and that is why it is important to closely follow the schedule to fully immunize your child – so that the child's body is prepared to fight any diseases for which vaccines are available.

**Simon:** Precisely! Maya, I'm confident you'll do a great job addressing any concerns or questions on the role vaccines play in keeping children healthy.

**Maya:** Thank you, Simon! This is very helpful, but now I wonder how I will share all this important information with caregivers. Sometimes there are so many mothers waiting with their babies, and I have only limited time to spend with each of them.

**Simon:** I know, it's not easy when we are pressed for time. Remember you can have a group health talk first, with all the waiting mothers together, to provide general information about the vaccines and explain how to manage any mild side effects. Then during the one-on-one session with the caregiver you can focus on the specific questions and concerns they have and make sure they know when to bring their child back for the next vaccination.

**Maya:** Thank you, again, Simon, for your great advice!

**Narrator:** What a great example of a supervisor helping out a frontline worker prepare for helping caregivers understand the importance of immunization and for introducing a new vaccine. Simon and Maya didn't talk about which vaccine is being introduced, but these messages can be used when any new vaccine is introduced since caregivers are likely to have the same concerns regardless of the disease that the vaccine protects against. When you're talking with caregivers about these topics, always remember to show empathy with caregivers and allow them to express their concerns.