

TOPIC #10: Should any vaccines be required for children?

While opponents of mandatory vaccinations believe they are unsafe and violate parents' religious rights, proponents argue that no individual has the right to endanger public health.

In your response, analyze the two articles taken from www.procon.org to determine which position is best supported. Use relevant and specific evidence from both articles to support your response.

Article 1

- (1) Governments should not have the right to intervene in the health decisions parents make for their children. Thirty-one percent (31%) of parents believe they should have the right to refuse mandated school entry vaccinations for their children, according to a 2010 survey by the University of Michigan.
- (2) Many parents hold religious beliefs against vaccination. Forcing such parents to vaccinate their children would violate the First Amendment, which guarantees citizens the right to the free exercise of their religion.
- (3) Vaccines are often unnecessary in many cases where the threat of death from disease is small. During the early nineteenth century, mortality for the childhood diseases whooping cough, measles, and scarlet fever fell drastically before immunization became available. This decreased mortality has been attributed to improved personal hygiene, water purification, effective sewage disposal, and better food hygiene and nutrition.
- (4) Vaccines interfere with natural law and God's plan for humanity. Disease is a natural occurrence, and humans should not interfere with its trajectory.
- (5) Common childhood vaccinations may cause rare yet serious reactions including anaphylactic shock, paralysis, and sudden death. This risk is not worth taking, especially considering most diseases vaccinated against are not necessarily life threatening.

Article 2

- (1)** Vaccinations should be required for children. No individual should have the right to risk the health of the public for the purpose of satisfying their personal moral, philosophical, or religious views.
- (2)** Vaccines can eradicate disease and prevent serious illness and death. Mandatory vaccination has eradicated diseases that once killed thousands of children, such as polio and smallpox. According to researchers at the Pediatric Academic Society, childhood vaccinations in the US prevent about 10.5 million cases of infectious illness and 33,000 deaths per year.
- (3)** According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, most childhood vaccines are 90 – 99% effective in preventing disease. When children who have been vaccinated do contract a disease, despite being vaccinated against it, they usually have milder symptoms with less serious complications than an unvaccinated child who gets the same disease.
- (4)** Since some individuals who have been vaccinated may still get sick when exposed to infected individuals, 75 – 94% of the population (depending on the disease) must be vaccinated to achieve “herd immunity.” When herd immunity is achieved, the number of immunized individuals is high enough to prevent the spread of disease through the population.
- (5)** The risks of not being vaccinated far outweigh the small risks associated with vaccination. Preventable diseases like measles and mumps can cause permanent disability and death. In 1991, an outbreak of measles in an unvaccinated group of children in Philadelphia caused seven deaths. Children infected with the mumps can become permanently deaf. Although a very small number of deaths from the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine have been reported, the most common adverse reactions are minor soreness and/or fever.