

# Words to know

**Adopted** - When part of the government makes new rules based on advice from other government groups. For example, HHS adopted ideas from ACIP.

**Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)** – a group of vaccine experts who help the government make choices about vaccines. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices is called ACIP for short.

**Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)** – the part of the federal government that makes many choices about health care in the United States. The Department of Health and Human services makes choices about vaccines. The Department of Health and Human Services is called HHS for short.

**Dose** – one shot of a vaccine.

**Evidence** – a type of fact that shows something is true.

**Federal government** – the government for the whole United States.

**Flu** – a disease that can make people very sick or even kill people. Scientists sometimes call the flu ‘influenza’.

**Multi-dose vaccines** – Big tubes of vaccines. These tubes have enough of the vaccine to give to more than one person.

**Preservatives** – ingredients that help vaccines stay safe to use for a longer time.

**Single-dose vaccines** – Small tubes of vaccines. These tubes only have enough of the vaccine to give to one person.

**Sources** – people or groups who share information.

**Thimerosal** – an ingredient that helps vaccines stay safe to use for a longer time. Thimerosal is only used in some kinds of flu vaccines.

**Vaccines** – shots doctors give people to keep people from getting sick.

# What is this statement?

This statement is about vaccines. **Vaccines** are shots doctors give people to keep people from getting sick. In the past few weeks, part of the federal government made some choices about

vaccines. The **federal government** is the government for the whole United States. The rest of this statement will explain the choices part of the federal government is making about vaccines.

## Why does ASAN care about vaccines?

Vaccines help keep people from getting sick. Some people think that vaccines cause autism. This is not true! The idea that vaccines cause autism came from a study with fake evidence.

**Evidence** is a type of fact that shows something is true. For thirty years, scientists have done many studies that show vaccines do not cause autism.

But because some people think vaccines cause autism, they want to make changes to vaccines. These changes would make it harder for people to get vaccines. Some people who think this way got chosen to help the federal government make choices about vaccines. ASAN wants to make sure that the federal government makes good choices about vaccines. ASAN wants to make sure the federal government makes choices about vaccines that are based on facts.

## What is the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)?

The part of the federal government that makes choices about vaccines is the **Department of Health and Human Services**. The Department of Health and Human Services is called HHS for short.

HHS gets advice from vaccine experts to make their choices about vaccines. These vaccine experts work together on the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. The **Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices** is called ACIP for short. ACIP has meetings where members vote on what advice they will give to HHS about vaccines. The advice can be about the ingredients in vaccines. The advice can be about who should get certain kinds of vaccines.

## What are ACIP and HHS doing with vaccines right now?

ACIP had a meeting in June. At the meeting, ACIP members voted on rules about a flu vaccine ingredient called thimerosal. **Thimerosal** is an ingredient that helps vaccines stay safe to use for a longer time. Ingredients that help vaccines stay safe to use for a longer time are called **preservatives**. Thimerosal is only used in some kinds of vaccines for the **flu**. The flu is a disease that can make people very sick and even kill people.

Some people said that thimerosal can cause autism. But no evidence from studies has ever shown that thimerosal causes autism. Studies have shown many times that thimerosal in flu

vaccines does not cause autism. The studies also show that thimerosal in flu vaccines does not hurt people's brains. There are a lot of studies showing that thimerosal does not hurt people at all.

But some ACIP members still do not want flu vaccines to have thimerosal. The ACIP had a vote in June about whether or not to keep using thimerosal in vaccines. Their vote said that ACIP thought people should not get vaccines that have thimerosal.

Last week, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) adopted ACIP's advice. **Adopted** means that HHS will use ACIP's advice to make rules about vaccines. That means HHS will make rules that only let people get vaccines that do not have thimerosal.

## How will ACIP and HHS's choices about vaccines affect people?

### It will be harder for people to get vaccines

ACIP and HHS's choices about vaccines will make it harder for some people to get vaccines. This is because getting rid of thimerosal in vaccines means that doctors cannot give people some kinds of vaccines.

Thimerosal is only an ingredient in multi-dose vaccines for the flu. **Multi-dose vaccines** are big tubes of vaccines. They have enough of the vaccine to give to more than one person. You can think of multi-dose vaccines like a cake. The cake is big enough for more than one person to get a slice. Each slice is one dose. A **dose** is one shot of a vaccine.

**Single-dose vaccines** are small tubes of vaccines. They only have enough of the vaccine to give to one person. You can think of single-dose vaccines like a cupcake. The cupcake is only big enough for one person to have. Each cupcake is one dose.

Getting rid of thimerosal means getting rid of some kinds of multi-dose flu vaccines. Getting rid of multi-dose flu vaccines means some people will not be able to get flu vaccines. The people who will not be able to get flu vaccines live in countries outside of the U.S.

ACIP's choices about vaccines affect people in other countries. Other countries follow ACIP's advice about vaccines even though ACIP is based in the United States. In the United States, only about 5% of flu vaccines have thimerosal as an ingredient. But in some other countries, a lot more flu vaccines have thimerosal as an ingredient. Multi-dose flu vaccines are the only kind of flu vaccine people can get in some other countries. People all over the world who want to get vaccines should be able to get vaccines. Vaccines are an important part of keeping people from getting sick.

## People might not trust HHS for information about vaccines

HHS has shared information about vaccines for a long time. Many people look at the HHS website and other resources to learn about vaccines. But now, HHS is making a bad choice about vaccines. The bad choice about vaccines is based on information that is not true. People might not trust HHS for information about vaccines because of this bad choice.

It would be really bad if people do not trust HHS to give them correct information about vaccines. It would mean that people might not listen to HHS about other important health issues. They might not listen even if HHS shares information that is true. Some people might believe the things HHS says that are not true. They might make decisions that hurt their health from listening to information that is not true.

The person in charge of HHS is Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. is called RFK for short. On August 2nd, HHS posted a video of RFK talking about thimerosal. RFK said a lot of things in the video that are not true. In the video, RFK said over and over again that thimerosal in flu vaccines hurts people's bodies and brains. But many scientists have proven that thimerosal in flu vaccines does not hurt people. The American Academy of Pediatrics posted a short video that explains this. You can watch the video [here](#).

HHS should share information about vaccines that is based on facts. The information HHS is sharing about thimerosal is not based on facts. We think RFK should resign because he says things about vaccines and autism not based on facts. You can read another plain language statement ASAN wrote about RFK [here](#). We need sources we can trust to share information about vaccines, health, and medicine. **Sources** are people or groups who share information.

We think state governments should spend time and money to make sure the information they share is true. We think other organizations who work on medicine and vaccines should only share information about vaccines and autism that is true. We appreciate the American Academy of Pediatrics because they share true information about vaccines. It is important for people to be able to get information about vaccines and autism that they can trust.