

# Immunisation GET THE FACTS

## An Open Letter to the Parents of Australia

Immunisation is one of the greatest achievements of medical science. Since the humble observations about cowpox made by Edward Jenner in the 1700s, vaccination programs have saved millions of lives and dramatically decreased child mortality and suffering. Diseases such as smallpox are now consigned to history, while polio has virtually disappeared.

But sadly there are some people who are vehemently opposed to vaccinations. While they will tell you they are 'pro-choice' not 'anti-vaccination', their actions indicate otherwise – almost as if they want to remove your choice to have your children live in a disease-free society.

In Australia, the deceptively titled 'Australian Vaccination Network' (AVN) spreads misinformation about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. They incorrectly claim that vaccines contain toxic quantities of heavy metals such as mercury as well as aluminium, anti-freeze and formaldehyde. Further, they will tell you that vaccines cause diseases such as autism, despite the fact that, as a result of concerted scientific research, a link between vaccines and autism has been unequivocally dismissed.

In addition to discouraging parents from vaccinating their children, the AVN provides incorrect information about the risks and complications from contracting childhood illnesses. They have stated that whooping cough is "just a bad cough" but in reality, children can suffer from collapsed lungs, cracked ribs, brain damage from lack of oxygen, convulsions, and about 1 in 200 will develop pneumonia and die. Even those who survive may have persistent symptoms.

Ultimately, the decision to vaccinate or not lies with you, the parent. Before you make your choice we urge you to seek out unbiased, accurate advice from reputable medical sources. The Australian Vaccination Network is no such source.

**Talk to your GP or visit these reliable sources  
for vaccination information on the web**

**Immunise Australia Program:** [www.immunise.health.gov.au](http://www.immunise.health.gov.au)

**Australian Childhood Immunisation Register:**  
[www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/public/services/acir/index.jsp](http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/public/services/acir/index.jsp)

**The Australian Immunisation Handbook:**  
[www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/Handbook-home](http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/Handbook-home)

**Immunisation myths and realities – responding to arguments against immunisation:**  
[www.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/content/uci-myths-guideprov](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/content/uci-myths-guideprov)

**National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance:** [www.ncirs.usyd.edu.au](http://www.ncirs.usyd.edu.au)

**Quackwatch:** [www.quackwatch.org/03HealthPromotion/immu/immu00.html](http://www.quackwatch.org/03HealthPromotion/immu/immu00.html)