

Health workers in Uzbekistan say parents more often refuse to have their children vaccinated because of fear of complications, on religious grounds, and some say “it makes no sense” and “it’s my child, I’ll do whatever I want”.

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According to the Ministry of Health of Uzbekistan, the vaccination programme against 12 types of infectious diseases in the country covers 98.4-99.7 per cent. In 2018, 728,804 children were vaccinated. However, despite the low level of refusals to vaccinate, the country records the outbursts of measles and pertussis.

Nigora Fathullayeva (not her real name):

— I have a feeling of a lump in my throat when I recall that year. Who could ever imagine that my beautiful daughter would be in such situation? It happened when she was one and a half years old. We had to get a MMR vaccine (measles, mumps, rubella). The only thing I was worrying about was her high body temperature. Anyway, I decided to take my daughter to the primary care physician, and he examined her and persuaded me to get a vaccine as nothing serious would happen.

I don’t have medical education, so I trusted the person in white coat, who is responsible for the lives of children every single day. It was my gravest mistake and I still think everything could be different.

The next day my daughter was hospitalised. She developed high temperature, 40°C, and convulsions. We stayed in hospital for a long time (nearly 5 months), and my child was on intensive treatment. Health workers saved my child’s life, but after this ill-fated vaccine my daughter was diagnosed with a complication, the encephalitis (brain fever – editor’s note).



Photo: Reuters

I remember how the earth disappeared

beneath my feet when I heard the diagnosis. I don’t know how that doctor can sleep at nights and how he continues to work. Because of him my child has become mentally retarded for the rest of her life. The doctor injected the vaccine to maintain his schedule, without thinking of consequences that my child would not live a full life given by God.

[See also: “I’ll Never Agree on Vaccines.” More Parents in Kazakhstan Refuse Vaccination](#)

Much time has passed since then, and my girl is on file with the psychoneurologic dispensary. I share this story to make mothers more attentive and careful. I hope my story will serve as a lesson to all the people.

Such post-vaccine complications are very rare. According to epidemiologists, the possibility of getting encephalitis after vaccination is one in a million. However, in case of measles, this possibility increases up to one in thousand case.



Photo: nuz.uz

Besides, complications are possible when a sick child gets a vaccine. Serious attention should be paid to DPT (triple vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis) and measles vaccines. Vaccines against poliomyelitis, hepatitis B, BCG (against tuberculosis) don’t develop complication, a paediatrician said on condition of anonymity:

— A child must be healthy, mother should be carefully interviewed to find out if anyone is sick at home, if the child is sick or not, in order to avoid any contacts with the respiratory infection. If there’s any contact, the vaccine may not be administered.

After DPT, a light fever can develop the next day or the same day; however, it’s a good

sign meaning the immunity is being developed. Body temperature is thought to be normal if it’s under 39.

If the district doctor makes a mistake and vaccinates a sick child, the following complications will develop: body temperature 39 and above, development of acute respiratory infection, which can later develop into bronchitis because DPT causes the development of the infection that a child was exposed to for one-two days already. However, it happens very rarely.

See also: [*A Vaccine of Discord, or Why Parents in Kyrgyzstan Refuse Vaccination*](#)

Ministry of health: In 2017, only 2 per cent of children under 2 years old developed normal reactions [increased temperature] after vaccination and 2 cases were registered among teenagers after the flu shot. All of them were hospitalised, examined and ended with no severe complications or lethal outcomes. In 2018, the number of children with normal reactions was about 1.8 per cent, with no severe complications reported.



Photo: gazeta.uz

According to another paediatrician, the most common reasons for vaccine refusal is the

mindset and religious views:

— In my practice, I’ve seen enough mothers who refused vaccination claiming the vaccines contained a pork component. Moreover, such mothers cannot be admonished. The only reasons they give are the words of a neighbour, mother-in-law, friend, husband, etc.

They sign vaccination refusals, at best. At worst, everything ends up with a scandal and abuses only because we try to explain the importance of vaccination to them.

There have been cases when mothers were adequate, but their husbands’ families were strongly against. They tried to influence the child’s mother even violently, by locking her at home, threatening her. Some women either managed to escape or leave the family saying that the child’s health comes first. However, these cases are rare.

Paediatrician **Ekaterina Ivanova** (not her real name):



Photo: UNICEF

— Another reason for vaccination refusal is its origin. Our policlinics make India-made vaccines, while mothers demand Belgian ones as they are deemed better purified than the Indian ones.

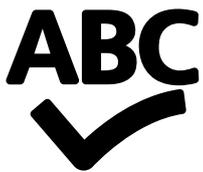
However, mothers worry because Indian vaccine is pentavalent, i.e. it consists of five elements – DPT, hepatitis B, Hib component (haemophilus infection). If all of the above reasons do not affect the mother’s decision, they are referred to the vaccination centre, where they get Belgian vaccines.

They [parents] justify their decision by saying “I don’t want”, “it makes no sense”, “it’s my child, I’ll do whatever I want”.

Often there are parents who refuse vaccinations for no specific reason. They justify their decision by saying “I don’t want”, “it makes no sense”, “it’s my child, I’ll do whatever I want”. Such parents are very difficult to reach and to make them understand that tetanus is a lethal disease. Its virus lives in the ground and a child can get the virus if the dirt gets into the wound.

Since May 2018, Uzbek health workers have recorded the outbreak of measles. 22 cases confirmed by laboratories have been registered. According to the ministry of health, WHO has confirmed that the virus of the disease has been brought from neighbouring states. In 2017, 102 Uzbekistanis went down with pertussis and last year the number of sick people was 121, with 90 per cent of children under one year old who were not vaccinated.

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