



## Neutral Talking Points on Vaccine Safety and Regulation

Below is a list of resources that may be helpful to you and your organization as you continue to engage the public, the media, and government officials on the topic of life-saving vaccines.

A compilation of vaccine safety research:

<https://vaccinateyourfamily.org/questions-about-vaccines/vaccine-research/>

General answers to the questions regarding the safety of vaccines, safety systems, etc:

<https://vaccinateyourfamily.org/questions-about-vaccines/are-vaccines-safe/>

What are the ingredients and why are they used in vaccines?

<https://vaccinateyourfamily.org/questions-about-vaccines/whats-in-a-vaccine/>

## Messaging Points to Address Past and Recent Anti-Vaccine Claims by Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

**Objective:** Provide neutral, non-partisan responses and resources to address past and recent anti-vaccine statements made by Robert F. Kennedy Jr., emphasizing factual information and scientific consensus.

**1. Claim:** Vaccines, particularly those containing thimerosal, are linked to autism.

- **News article:** *Washington Post*, July 18, 2014, [Robert Kennedy Jr.'s belief in autism-vaccine connection, and its political peril](#)
- **Rebuttal:** Extensive research has found no credible evidence connecting thimerosal in vaccines to autism. Thimerosal, a mercury-based preservative, was removed from most childhood vaccines in the U.S. by 2001, yet autism rates have continued to rise, indicating no correlation.
- **Resource:**  
<https://www.factcheck.org/2023/08/scicheck-factchecking-robert-f-kennedy-jr/>
  - Other relevant articles:
    - <https://www.salon.com/2005/06/17/thimerosal/>

- <https://pauloffit.substack.com/p/my-conversation-with-robert-f-kennedy>

## 2. Claim: The U.S. needs to conduct more research to determine if vaccines cause autism

- **Rebuttal:** Extensive research has been conducted to determine if there is any potential connection between childhood vaccines and autism. The worldwide scientific consensus is that there is NO connection
  - Resource A compilation of vaccine safety research:  
<https://vaccinateyourfamily.org/questions-about-vaccines/vaccine-research/>
- The federal government conducted Omnibus Autism Proceedings to decide on the claim that vaccines cause autism and the judges determined that these claims were false.

**Background:** The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (also referred to as “the vaccine court”), housed in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, initiated the Omnibus Autism Proceedings (OAP) in July 2002 to consolidate the thousands of claims filed by petitioners claiming that vaccines caused autism. The petitioners’ lawyers formed a Petitioners’ Steering Committee (PSC) in order to consolidate the processes and, in conjunction with the Court, decided that all the cases filed fell within three theories:

- MMR vaccine and other thimerosal-containing vaccines combined cause autism
- Thimerosal-containing vaccines cause autism
- MMR vaccine causes autism

The overall decision was that MMR vaccine and other thimerosal-containing vaccines combined do not cause autism. Decisions include:

- [Cedillo Decision](#) – Special Master Hastings
- [Hazlehurst Decision](#) – Special Master Campbell-Smith
- [Snyder Decision](#) – Special Master Vowell

The overall decision was that thimerosal-containing vaccines do not contribute to autism. Decisions include:

- [Snyder Decision](#)– Special Master Sweeney
- [Dwyer Decision](#)– Special Master Vowell
- [King Decision](#)– Special Master Hastings

Only the first two cases were heard. The third was deemed to be too similar to the others to justify an additional hearing.

## Resources

- United States Court of Federal Claims: [Docket of Omnibus Autism Proceeding](#)
- HRSA: [National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program](#)

### 3. Claim: The COVID-19 vaccine is the "deadliest vaccine ever made".

*At a 2021 state House hearing on a Louisiana Department of Health proposal to require schoolchildren to be vaccinated against the coronavirus, Kennedy proclaimed the vaccine to be the "deadliest vaccine ever made."*

- **News Article:** *Washington Post*, November 15, 2024, [10 RFK Jr. conspiracy theories and false claims, in his own words](#)
- **Rebuttal:** This assertion is not supported by evidence. The Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) allows anyone to report events, regardless of causation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) monitor these reports and have found that the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination outweigh the risks.
- **Resource:**  
<https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2021/dec/10/robert-f-kennedy-jr/no-covid-19-vaccine-not-deadliest-vaccine-ever-mad/>

### 4. Claim: mRNA COVID-19 vaccines cause "irreparable" damage, as ruled by the U.S. Supreme Court.

- **News article:** *AP*, August 29, 2022, [Posts recycle baseless claim about mRNA vaccine SCOTUS case](#)
- **Rebuttal:** There is no record of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that mRNA COVID-19 vaccines cause irreparable damage. Such claims are baseless and have been debunked by fact-checking organizations.

### 5. Claim: Vaccines are not adequately tested for safety.

Vaccines undergo years of testing and are subject to thorough clinical trials.

- **News Article:** *Washington Post*, November 15, 2024, [10 RFK Jr. conspiracy theories and false claims, in his own words](#)

- **Rebuttal:** Vaccines undergo rigorous testing in multiple phases of clinical trials to assess their safety and efficacy before approval. Post-approval, they are continually monitored for adverse events. This comprehensive process ensures that vaccines meet high safety standards.
- **Resource:** <https://www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/vaccines/emergency-use-authorization-vaccines-explained>

## 6. Claim: COVID-19 vaccines are ineffective and unnecessary.

- **News Article:** CNN, December 13, 2023: ['So you did say it': Hunt debunks RFK Jr. vaccine claims](#)
- **Rebuttal:** Clinical trials and real-world studies have demonstrated that COVID-19 vaccines are effective in reducing the severity of illness, hospitalizations, and deaths. Vaccination remains a crucial tool in controlling the spread of the virus and protecting public health.
- **Resource:** <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8862168/>

## 7. Claim: Vaccines contain harmful levels of mercury.

- **News Article:** STAT, Paul Offit, September 22, 2017: [Correcting Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s vaccine 'facts'](#)
- **Rebuttal:** Thimerosal, a mercury-containing preservative, has been removed from or reduced to trace amounts in all vaccines recommended for children under six years of age, except for some flu vaccines. The type of mercury in thimerosal is ethylmercury, which is processed differently in the body than methylmercury and is considered safe in the amounts used in vaccines.

## 8. Claim: Natural immunity is superior to vaccine-induced immunity.

- **News Article:** *Washington Post*, November 15, 2024, [10 RFK Jr. conspiracy theories and false claims, in his own words](#)
- **Rebuttal:** While natural infection can provide immunity, it comes with the risk of severe disease and complications. Vaccination provides a safe way to develop immunity without the risks associated with natural infection. Health authorities recommend vaccination even for those who have had prior infections to ensure robust and long-lasting protection.
- **Resource:** <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/basics/immunity-types.html#:~:text=Natural%20im>

[munity%20is%20acquired%20from,the%20disease%20organism%20through%20vaccination.](#)

## 9. Claim: Vaccine mandates infringe on personal freedoms.

- **News Article:** PBS, July 31,2023: [Debunking some of RFK Jr.'s contradictory statements](#)
- **Rebuttal:** Public health measures, including vaccine recommendations, aim to protect the health of the community, especially the most vulnerable. Vaccination helps prevent outbreaks of infectious diseases, safeguarding public health and allowing societies to function more normally.
- **Resource:**
  - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) explains the rationale behind vaccine mandates, emphasizing that they are designed to protect both individuals and the public, particularly those most at risk.
    - Link:  
[https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/php/requirements-laws/?CDC\\_AAref\\_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/laws/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/php/requirements-laws/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/laws/index.html)
  - This resource covers:
    - The public health reasons for vaccination mandates.
    - How mandates have successfully reduced disease outbreaks.
    - Legal frameworks that support vaccination policies in schools and other settings.

## 10. Claim: Vaccines are a means for pharmaceutical companies to profit at the expense of public health.

- **News Article:** *Washington Post*, November 15, 2024, [10 RFK Jr. conspiracy theories and false claims, in his own words](#)
- **Rebuttal:** Vaccines have been one of the most effective public health interventions, preventing millions of deaths and illnesses. While pharmaceutical companies do profit from vaccines, regulatory agencies ensure that vaccines are safe and effective, and many vaccines are provided at low or no cost to the public.
- **Additional Point:** The Vaccine Excise Tax funds the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (NVICP), which provides financial support to individuals who may experience rare vaccine-related adverse events. Similarly, the Countermeasures Injury Compensation Program (CICP) offers compensation for injuries related to public health emergency measures, demonstrating the

system's commitment to public accountability and safety. These programs ensure a balance between public health benefits and individual protections.

- **Resource:**

- [https://www.who.int/health-topics/vaccines-and-immunization#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/vaccines-and-immunization#tab=tab_1)
  - This page provides evidence-based insights into how vaccines save lives, the rigorous regulatory processes they undergo, and their role in global health equity. It is one of the best resources for understanding both the public health benefits and the safety assurances in place for vaccines.

## **11. Claim: The rapid development of COVID-19 vaccines compromised their safety.**

- **Rebuttal:** The accelerated development of COVID-19 vaccines was achieved through unprecedented global collaboration and investment, building upon years of prior research. Despite the speed, all vaccines underwent the standard phases of clinical trials to ensure safety and efficacy before receiving emergency use authorization or approval.
- **Resource:**  
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/covid-19-vaccines>
- **Resource:** The story behind Covid vaccines  
<https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abi8397>
- **News Article:** *Washington Post*, November 15, 2024, [10 RFK Jr. conspiracy theories and false claims, in his own words](#)

## **12. Claim: The Vaccine Injury Compensation Program should be dismantled as it only serves to shield manufacturers from liability at the cost of the public.**

**Rebuttal:** The [National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program](#) (VICP), sometimes known as the “vaccine court,” was created in 1986 as a no-fault, government-funded payout program for people who claim to be injured by vaccines. This program is funded by a small tax put on each vaccine.

- A \$0.75 excise tax is put on each dose of vaccine for every disease that is prevented. So, vaccines like HPV and flu are charged a single \$0.75 tax because they each prevent against a single disease, and vaccines like MMR and DTaP are charged a \$2.25 tax because each of the vaccines prevent against three separate diseases.

- o The Department of Treasury collects the taxes and manages the funds which are paid out to people needing compensation. By using these funds and not litigating with the vaccine manufacturers directly, vaccine costs and supply can remain stable so that people are able to continue to have access to lifesaving vaccines.
- o If someone believes they were injured by a [covered vaccine](#), they can file a petition. Parents and legal representatives can file on behalf of children, disabled adults, and individuals who are deceased. People who believe they were injured by a COVID-19 vaccine can file for benefits through the [Countermeasures Injury Compensation Program](#).

### **The History of the VICP:**

- In the 1980s, increasing litigation against vaccines drove many manufacturers out of the U.S. market. To address this, Congress established the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP) in 1986 with the goals of: Ensuring an adequate supply of vaccines; Stabilizing vaccine costs; Providing an efficient way to compensate individuals injured by vaccines, recognizing that while rare, vaccine injuries can be serious.

Claims under the VICP are adjudicated by a group of Special Masters at the U.S. Court of Federal Claims. These Special Masters ensure that proceedings are “expeditious, flexible, and less adversarial” than traditional civil court cases.

### **Key Facts:**

- According to the CDC, from 2006 to 2022, over 5 billion doses of covered vaccines were distributed in the U.S. During this time, 12,320 petitions were adjudicated, with 8,946 cases compensated. This equates to approximately one individual compensated per 1 million doses distributed.
- Since the program began in 1988:
  - 27,975 petitions have been filed.
  - 24,262 petitions have been adjudicated.
  - 11,399 cases were determined to be compensable, while 12,863 petitions were dismissed.
  - Total compensation paid over the life of the program is approximately \$5.3 billion.



- In 60% of compensated cases, the vaccine was not determined to have caused the injury. Instead, parties negotiated a monetary settlement to avoid the risk, time, and expense of litigation.

The VICP maintains a Vaccine Injury Table listing specific injuries that could potentially be caused by vaccines. If a petitioner demonstrates they suffered one of these “table injuries” within a specified timeframe, they are compensated without needing a formal hearing.

**Find the most recently updated payout data report at the top of the [Vaccine Injury Compensation Data](#) web page.**



## Additional Resources:

- Autism Science Foundation:  
<https://autismsciencefoundation.org/autism-and-vaccines/>
- <https://www.salon.com/2005/06/17/thimerosal/> Letters to editor refuting Kennedy's claims
- <https://oracknows.blogspot.com/2005/06/saloncom-flushes-its-credibility-down.html>
- <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/rolling-stone-retracts-autism-article-but-lots-of-junk-journalism-remains/>
- <https://shotofprevention.com/2021/03/18/new-anti-vaccine-documentary-on-racism-in-healthcare-is-full-of-harmful-falsehoods/>
- <https://vaxopedia.org/2021/03/13/a-review-of-robert-f-kennedy-jr-s-medical-racism-film/>

## Non-Partisan Talking Points for Vaccine Advocates

**Objective:** To provide clear, non-partisan messaging to emphasize the importance of vaccines and communicate a willingness to collaborate constructively for the health of all Americans.

### Talking Point 1: Vaccines are One of the Most Successful Public Health Tools

- Vaccines have saved millions of lives and drastically reduced or eliminated deadly diseases like smallpox, polio, and measles.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have consistently affirmed that vaccines are among the safest and most effective ways to prevent infectious diseases.
- Claims that vaccines are inherently harmful or unnecessary are contradicted by decades of data showing their safety and effectiveness in preventing illness and protecting communities.

### Talking Point 2: Vaccine Safety is Thoroughly Evaluated by Experts

- Vaccines undergo rigorous testing in clinical trials before they are approved, involving thousands of participants to ensure they are safe and effective.

- Independent regulatory bodies like the FDA, CDC, and WHO continually monitor vaccines after approval to ensure ongoing safety.
- Expert advisory panels, such as the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), play a critical role in vaccine evaluation. VRBPAC provides recommendations to the FDA on the safety, effectiveness, and approval of vaccines, while ACIP advises the CDC on the use of vaccines for different populations, ensuring recommendations are based on the latest scientific evidence.
- Concerns about vaccine safety should be addressed with scientific evidence rather than misinformation, which can erode public trust and put lives at risk.

**Talking Point 3: Vaccine advocacy is about protecting everyone's health**

- **Vaccine advocacy is about protecting everyone's health** by ensuring that reliable, evidence-based health information is accessible to the public.
- The role of the U.S. Health Secretary should prioritize strategies proven to reduce disease, improve health outcomes, and strengthen community immunity.
- Vaccines have historically been one of the most effective public health tools, preventing millions of deaths and curbing diseases globally.

**Talking Point 4: A focus on evidence-based policies is essential to maintain public trust in health recommendations and practices.**

- Decades of research from reputable institutions worldwide confirm the safety and efficacy of vaccines in preventing serious, often fatal diseases.
- Vaccine advocacy organizations are committed to public health grounded in scientific evidence and are prepared to support leaders who share this commitment.

**Talking Point 5: Vaccine advocates are open to working with all leaders committed to public health, including those with past skepticism, if there is a shared focus on scientific integrity and community health.**

- Working towards shared goals: Advocates are prepared to find common ground to strengthen U.S. healthcare, promote accurate health information, and enhance trust in vaccines and other preventive measures.