

Video Group Discussion: NOVA: Calling the Shots (Vaccine issue)

Biology B

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/body/vaccines-calling-shots.html>

Group Members:

VIDEO OVERVIEW

Vaccines have been touted as one of the most successful advances of modern medicine, yet an increasing number of parents are choosing not to vaccinate their children because of possible side effects. In this video chapter from *The Vaccine War*, students will examine the debate among public health officials, doctors and parents around vaccine safety and hear differing perspectives on the benefits and risks of vaccination.

VIDEO THEMES

- Vaccines have increased our lifespan by 30 years and have largely eradicated certain diseases, like smallpox and polio.
- While vaccination now prevents 16 different communicable diseases in the United States, some parents are concerned about the safety and sheer number of vaccines given to young children.
- In communities like Ashland, Ore., where 28 percent of children lack some or all of their recommended vaccinations, some parents, health officials and school administrators worry about the possibility of an outbreak—or “breakthrough disease”—in vaccinated children.
- The issue of vaccination can be contentious on both sides and involves balancing the risks to the public as a whole versus the risks to any one family or child.

Turn paper over for discussion questions

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: record all viewpoints expressed in the group

1. Through a published schedule and set of guidelines, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and public health officials recommend that every child receive certain vaccinations by age 6. What are the benefits of the recommendation to
 - a. Public health officials?

 - b. The community?

 - c. Other children?

2. Some parents and health care professionals question the CDC's recommendations and decide not to vaccinate their children, while others choose to vaccinate their children along an alternative schedule. How might this decision affect both their own children and others?

3. In what ways is vaccination different from other types of personal health decisions?

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4. Who should be involved in deciding whether children receive a specific vaccine?

5. Should the government have the right to compel vaccination? Should parents have the right to refuse it?