

Glossary of Terms

Vaccine- A product that produces immunity from a disease and can be administered through needle injections, by mouth, or by aerosol.

Vaccination- The injection of a killed or weakened organism that produces immunity in the body against that organism.

Antibodies- Y-shaped proteins that are produced by the immune system to help stop intruders from harming the body. When an intruder enters the body, the immune system springs into action. These invaders, which are called antigens, can be viruses, bacteria, or other chemicals. When an antigen is found in the body, the immune system will create antibodies to mark the antigen for the body to destroy.

Function-The antibodies act sort of like the immune system's scouts. They find antigens, stick to them, and identify for the immune system the exact type of antigen so that it can be destroyed. Each antibody is made for one and only one antigen, and it's fitted with special receptors that will only bind to that antigen. For instance, a specific antibody is created to help destroy the chickenpox virus. Only that particular antibody will attack a chickenpox virus.

Herd immunity- When a critical portion of a community is immunized against a contagious disease, most members of the community are protected against that disease because there is little opportunity for an outbreak. Even those who are not eligible for certain vaccines—such as infants, pregnant women, or immunocompromised individuals—get some protection because the spread of contagious disease is contained. This is known as "community immunity."

The principle of community immunity applies to control of a variety of contagious diseases, including influenza, measles and mumps.