The DTaP vaccine prevents three serious bacterial diseases — diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis — that can cause permanent damage or death.

- **Diphtheria** causes a thick coating in the back of the throat which can cause breathing problems; organs can be affected leading to paralysis, heart failure, and even death. Approximately 5% of people (500 out of every 10,000) who develop diphtheria die from the disease and many more suffer permanent damage. The vaccine effectively protects 95% of children who receive the full series of shots.

- **Tetanus** (lockjaw) causes painful tightening of the muscles and can lead to “locking” of the jaw and inability to swallow. Approximately 30% of people (3,000 out of every 10,000) who get tetanus die from the disease and many more suffer permanent damage. The vaccine effectively protects nearly 100% of children who receive the full series of shots.

- **Pertussis** (Whooping cough) causes glue-like mucus and coughing spells so severe that it is hard for infants to eat, drink, or breathe. Pertussis can lead to pneumonia, seizures, brain damage, and death. Approximately 50 out of every 10,000 people who develop pertussis die from the disease and many more suffer permanent damage. The vaccine effectively protects at least 71% of children who receive the full series of shots. Children who have been vaccinated but do develop the disease will usually have a milder case.

About half of the children who receive the vaccine have no side effects at all, and most other children have only a mild reaction.

- Mild reactions include soreness where the shot was given, fever, fussiness, loss of appetite, tiredness, and vomiting.
- Some children may experience a temporary swelling of the arm or leg where the shot was given. This reaction is more common (about 2% of patients) after the fifth DTaP dose.

In rare cases (about 100 children out of 10,000 shots given, or about 1%) children have a moderate reaction.

- Moderate reactions include prolonged crying, fever of 105 degrees or higher, seizure, or the child becoming limp, pale or less alert.

In very rare cases (far less than 1 out of 10,000 shots given, or about 0.003%) children have a serious reaction.

- Serious reactions include breathing difficulty and shock, and severe brain reaction (long seizure, coma, or lowered consciousness).

If you do notice any moderate or serious reactions, you should call your doctor immediately.

- Aspirin-free pain reliever can be used to reduce fever and soreness.

Your child’s chance of being harmed by these diseases is far greater than any chance of being harmed by the vaccine.

- Immunizations are one of the most important ways parents can protect their children against serious infectious diseases.

Please also read the Vaccine Information Statement on the DTaP vaccine from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for other important information, including who should and who should not get the vaccine.