



Vaccine Ingredient Referendum: FAQ

On November 2, 2010 a non-binding referendum was passed in Oak Park. The non-binding referendum stated:

Shall the Village of Oak Park require those who inject vaccines, in the Village of Oak Park, to give the vaccine recipients, their parents or guardians the vaccine manufacturer's specific package inserts of the vaccines they will receive, and to inform them that, thimerosal/mercury-containing vaccines, including but not limited to, influenza (flu), meningococcal (meningitis) and tetanus vaccines, may contain 3 1/2 times the daily toxic dose of mercury exposure for an 148-pound adult?

- ♦ **Question:** What did the referendum do?

Answer: The recent vote on this non-binding referendum will require no change in the way vaccinations are administered in Oak Park

- ♦ **Question:** Is this referendum supported by the Village of Oak Park or the Oak Park Health Department?

Answer: This referendum was placed on the ballot by a third party and did not have the endorsement of the Village of Oak Park nor the Oak Park Health Department.

- ♦ **Question:** What is thimerosal and why is it used in vaccines?

Answer: Thimerosal or **ethylmercury**, is a mercury-based preservative that has been used for decades in the United States in multi-dose vials of medicines and vaccines. Thimerosal is added to vials of vaccine that contain more than one dose to prevent the growth of bacteria and fungi in the event that they get into the vaccine. This may occur when a syringe needle enters a vial as a vaccine is being prepared for administration. Contamination by germs in a vaccine could cause severe local reactions, serious illness or death. In some vaccines, preservatives are added during the manufacturing process to prevent microbial growth.

- ♦ **Question:** Is the mercury in thimerosal toxic?

Answer: No, thimerosal contains **ethylmercury**. Studies comparing the two types of mercury, ethylmercury and methylmercury suggest they are processed differently in the human body. Ethylmercury is broken down and excreted more rapidly than methylmercury. Ethylmercury is much less likely than methylmercury, the type of mercury in the environment, to accumulate in the body and cause harm. Certain types of bacteria in the environment can change mercury to methylmercury. Methylmercury makes its way through the food chain in fish, animals and humans. At high levels, it can be toxic to people.

- ♦ **Question:** Where can I learn more about vaccine ingredients and the safety of vaccines?

Answer: To learn more about vaccine safety visit these sites:

- ♦ <http://illinoisAAP.org/projects/reaching-our-goals/>
- ♦ <http://www.aap.org/immunization/>
- ♦ http://www.oak-park.us/Public_Health/Community_Health.html
- ♦ cdc.gov/vaccines
- ♦ immunize.org

If you have any further questions or concerns about the referendum please contact the Oak Park Health Department: 708/358-5480