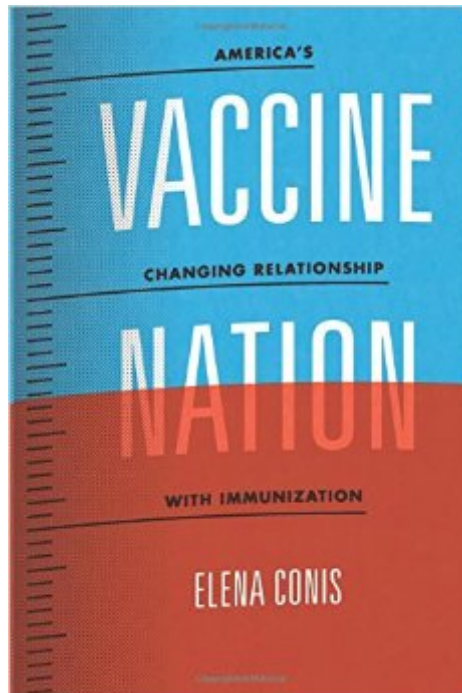


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Vaccine Nation: America's Changing Relationship With Immunization



Synopsis

With employers offering free flu shots and pharmacies expanding into one-stop shops to prevent everything from shingles to tetanus, vaccines are ubiquitous in contemporary life. The past fifty years have witnessed an enormous upsurge in vaccines and immunization in the United States: American children now receive more vaccines than any previous generation, and laws requiring their immunization against a litany of diseases are standard. Yet, while vaccination rates have soared and cases of preventable infections have plummeted, an increasingly vocal cross section of Americans have questioned the safety and necessity of vaccines. In *Vaccine Nation*, Elena Conis explores this complicated history and its consequences for personal and public health. *Vaccine Nation* opens in the 1960s, when government scientists' triumphant following successes combating polio and smallpox; considered how the country might deploy new vaccines against what they called the 'milder' diseases, including measles, mumps, and rubella. In the years that followed, Conis reveals, vaccines fundamentally changed how medical professionals, policy administrators, and ordinary Americans came to perceive the diseases they were designed to prevent. She brings this history up to the present with an insightful look at the past decade's controversy over the implementation of the Gardasil vaccine for HPV, which sparked extensive debate because of its focus on adolescent girls and young women. Through this and other examples, Conis demonstrates how the acceptance of vaccines and vaccination policies has been as contingent on political and social concerns as on scientific findings. By setting the complex story of American vaccination within the country's broader history, *Vaccine Nation* goes beyond the simple story of the triumph of science over disease and provides a new and perceptive account of the role of politics and social forces in medicine.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an excellent book that should be read by anyone who has an interest in the well-being of children. In the quest to guarantee the good health of all children, vaccinations are routinely touted as being effective, safe, and necessary. What historian Elena Conis does in this book is explain how we came to think this way about vaccines and why more parents are asking questions about vaccines, not only because of safety concerns but also because there are questions that are being left unanswered. This is an intriguing history of how vaccines have become such a routine part of children's existence. Whereas it should have been adults who should have been vaccinated long ago in order to protect children and babies, it became more convenient to vaccinate babies and children who were receiving regular physical check-ups with their pediatricians. Over the years, as Conis lucidly points out, the number of vaccinations American children receive has increased steadily. In the late 1970s, President Jimmy Carter campaigned to vaccinate babies and young children for 7 different illnesses (polio, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, measles, mumps, and rubella). Now, less than forty years later, children are expected to be vaccinated against those 7 illness and rotavirus, Haemophilus influenza type B, pneumococcus, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, chicken pox, meningococcus, human papilloma virus, and influenza. With all these vaccines, are children healthier? If so, why are babies and children still getting so many infections (including ear infections, gastroenteritis, upper respiratory infections)?

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