

Is it permissible to immunise one's child?

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

Immunisation is a method of protecting children, and hence the wider population, from various diseases by facilitating the production of antibodies which will allow their bodies to protect them if they were to come into contact with the disease

Vaccines are initiated by utilising the pathogen, which is the very organism that produces the disease, however it is altered before it is administered. This can be done in three ways; weakening or attenuating the pathogen so it does not cause complications (polio and MMR vaccines are made in this way); extracting that part of the pathogen which brings about the immune response (Hib vaccine is made by this method); and, destroying the pathogen by heating or using formalin (whooping cough vaccine is made this way). Other components are added before the vaccine is administered. Their purpose is to stimulate the immune system to produce antibodies without having to be infected by the disease.

Certain diseases are passed from human to human and therefore if a significant portion of the community is immunised, then it is difficult for it to be passed on; this is referred to as 'herd immunity'. For instance, Measles is highly infectious, therefore if no children were immunised then virtually all would be infected, if 90% of children were vaccinated it would stop the disease spreading and if 95% were vaccinated then it would be eliminated. Vaccination is available for Meningitis, Flu, Measles, Mumps, Pneumococcal Cervical Cancer and Rubella (NHS, 2008).

Islam, not only permits but rather, makes it compulsory to find ways of caring and curing

the body and mind; however that is after a person has been diagnosed with a certain illness. The argument against immunisation is that one is attempting to 'cure' oneself in the absence of an illness. Therefore, as the argument goes, one may or may not contract this disease and as there is a possibility of not contracting it then one should wait for one's fate rather than second-guessing; or putting it another way we should leave it in Allāh's Hands until He decides and then take reactionary action. However, this premise is flawed as there are many examples whereby, a person would be Islamically required to perform preventative action rather than reactionary; for instance, the wearing of a seat belt. In this case one may or may not be in a car accident, which could result in the driver or passenger(s) being thrown about in the car or out of the windscreen. As a preventative action a person wears a seatbelt in order to be as safe as possible in the possibility of a crash.

There are a number of legal maxims referred to as *Al-Qawā'id Al-Fiqhiyya* that will make immunisation permissible, if not necessary.

The origin in entities is permissibility. [*Radd al-Muhtār* of Imām ibn Ābidīn]

A greater harm is removed by a lesser harm. [*al-Ashbā wa al-Nazā'ir* of Imām ibn Nujaym]

Harm is to be removed. [*al-Ashbā wa al-Nazā'ir* of Imām ibn Nujaym]

It is obligatory upon the Muslim that he removes the means of destruction from himself.

[*Sharḥ al-Siyar al-Kabīr* of Imām Abū Bakr al-Sarakhsī]

Averting harm is superior to gaining benefit. [*al-Majalla* and that is the compilation of the Civil Code of the Ottoman Caliphate based on sharī'a principles]

The specific harm will be acted upon in order to remove the general harm. [*al-Ashbā wa al-Nazā'ir* of Imām ibn Nujaym / *al-Majalla* and that is the compilation of the Civil Code of the Ottoman Caliphate based on sharī'a principles]

The lesser of the two harms is selected. [*al-Majalla* and that is the compilation of the Civil Code of the Ottoman Caliphate based on sharī'a principles]

Matters are according to their objectives. [*al-Ashbā wa al-Nazā'ir* of Imām ibn Nujaym]

In conclusion it is permissible to immunise oneself, or one's children against diseases.

References

NHS (2008) Immunisation Information [online] Available from
<http://www.immunisation.nhs.uk> accessed 16th December 2008

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