

Religious Views of Vaccination At-A-Glance

- While there is a minority of **Amish** parents who do not vaccinate their children, vaccination is not prohibited by their religion.¹
- In 2010, Tibetan **Buddhist** spiritual leader and Nobel laureate the Dalai Lama helped vaccinate and launch a polio eradication drive in India.²
- There are some faith-healing groups—of which the **Church of Christ, Scientist (Christian Science)** is the most prominent—that believe they can heal all things through prayer rather than through medicine. Therefore, many of these worshippers strongly oppose vaccinations.^{3, 4, 5}
- The **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints** has supported childhood vaccination for over 30 years. In July 1978 they stated, “We urge members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to protect their own children through immunization. Then they may wish to join other public-spirited citizens in efforts to eradicate ignorance and apathy that have caused the disturbingly low levels of childhood immunization.”⁶
- There is no formal statement from **Hindu** authorities on vaccination, as Hinduism has several hundreds of sects, each with its own traditions and rules. Many areas of the world with large Hindu populations, such as India which is 80.5% Hindu, have taken proactive efforts to eradicate vaccine-preventable diseases like polio.^{7, 8}
- Many imams and other **Islamic** leaders have issued clear statements commenting that vaccination is consistent with Islamic principles.^{9, 10, 11} In particular, a 1995 conference of Islamic scholars concluded, “The transformation of pork products into gelatin alters them sufficiently to make it permissible for observant Muslims to receive vaccines containing pork gelatin.”¹² However, some specific select Muslim communities throughout the world have opposed vaccinations, including the Nation of Islam, whose leader Minister Louis Farrakhan once said that the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine was designed to kill people.¹³
- According to The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, the main legal entity that organizes worldwide activities by **Jehovah’s Witnesses**, “We have no objection to vaccines in general.”¹⁴
- While there is no single voice for **Jewish** communities, many rabbis have spoken out in favor of vaccinations noting the importance of preserving life (*pikuakh nefesh*) and that, according to Jewish law, there is no objection to porcine or other animal-derived ingredients in vaccines.¹⁵
- There is no official statement on immunization from **Sikh** authorities. But generally, Sikhs do not have religious or societal issues against vaccination.

- The **Roman Catholic Church** recognizes the importance of vaccinations and their use in the fight against infectious disease to protect both individuals and the larger community. It advocates use of alternatives, if available, of certain viral vaccines manufactured in cell lines with remote fetal origins. However, “as regards the vaccines without an alternative, the need to contest so that others may be prepared must be reaffirmed, as should be the lawfulness of using the former in the meantime inasmuch as is necessary in order to avoid a serious risk not only for one's own children but also, and perhaps more specifically, for the health conditions of the population as a whole - especially for pregnant women; the lawfulness of the use of these vaccines should not be misinterpreted as a declaration of the lawfulness of their production, marketing and use, but is to be understood as being a passive material cooperation and, in its mildest and remotest sense, also active, morally justified as an extrema ratio due to the necessity to provide for the good of one's children and of the people who come in contact with the children (pregnant women).”¹⁶

¹ Grens, K. (June 27, 2011). Amish Parents Mirror Wider Concerns over Vaccines. *Reuters Health*. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/27/us-amish-parents-idUSTRE75Q5SO20110627>

² Reuters. (January 10, 2010). Video: Dalai Lama Launches polio vaccine. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/video/2010/01/10/dalai-lama-launches-polio-vaccine?videoId=26160277>

³ The College of Physicians of Philadelphia. (2012). Cultural Perspectives on Vaccination. *The History of Vaccines*. Retrieved from <http://www.historyofvaccines.org/content/articles/cultural-perspectives-vaccination>

⁴ GOOD.is. (February 3, 2011). Should Parents Be Allowed to Pray Their Children Healthy? Retrieved from <http://www.good.is/posts/should-families-that-believe-in-faith-healing-be-prosecuted-when-their-children-die>

⁵ Rodgers, D.V., Gindler, J.S., Atkinson, W.L., & Markowitz L.E. (1993). High Attack Rates and Case Fatality During a Measles Outbreak in Groups with Religious Exemption to Vaccination. *Pediatric Infectious Disease Journal*, 12(4): 288-292. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8483622>

⁶ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (July 1978). Immunize Children, Leaders Urge. *Liahona*. Retrieved from <http://www.lds.org/liahona/1978/07/immunize-children-leaders-urge?lang=eng>

⁷ Memon, A. (September 20, 2012). Opinion: Cross-border Lessons in Saving Lives. *The Hindu*. Retrieved from <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/article3916454.ece>

⁸ Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India under Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. (2010-2011). Distribution of Population by Religions. Retrieved from http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/religion.aspx

⁹ Yahya M. (2006). Polio vaccines—Difficult to Swallow. The Story of a Controversy in Northern Nigeria. Institute of Development Studies. Retrieved from www.ids.ac.uk/files/Wp261.pdf

¹⁰ Kaufmann, J.R., & Feldbaum, H. (2009). Diplomacy and the Polio Immunization Boycott in Northern Nigeria. *Health Affairs*, 28(July-August)(4):1091-101. Retrieved from <http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/28/4/1091.full.html>

¹¹ Jegede, A.S. (2007). What Led to the Nigerian Boycott of the Polio Vaccination Campaign? *PLoS Med*, 4(Mar):e73. Retrieved from <http://www.plosmedicine.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pmed.0040073>

¹² Institute for Vaccine Safety. (2010). Religious Leaders Approval of Use of Vaccines Containing Porcine Gelatin. Retrieved from <http://www.vaccinesafety.edu/Porcine-vaccineapproval.htm>

¹³ United Press International, Inc. (October 19, 2009). Farrakhan Suspicious of H1N1 Vaccine. Retrieved from http://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2009/10/19/Farrakhan-suspicious-of-H1N1-vaccine/UPI-63931256011008/

¹⁴ Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. (2012). Our View of Medical Care: Health Choices. Retrieved from <http://www.jw-media.org/aboutjw/article02.htm>



¹⁵ Institute for Vaccine Safety. (2010). Religious Leaders Approval of Use of Vaccines Containing Porcine Gelatin. Retrieved from <http://www.vaccinesafety.edu/Porcine-vaccineapproval.htm>

¹⁶ Pontifical Academy for Life. (2005) "Moral Reflections on Vaccines Prepared from Cells Derived from Aborted Human Foetuses" Retrieved from <http://www.academiavita.org/publications.php>