Immunizations Keep Us Well

Although few things in medicine work 100% of the time, vaccines are highly effective weapons against disease. They work in 85% to 99% of the cases!

Vaccines help make you immune to serious diseases without your getting sick first. They work by preparing the body to fight illness. Each immunization contains either a dead or a weakened germ (or part of it) that causes a particular disease. The body practices fighting the disease by making antibodies that fight the germ. Then if someone is exposed to the actual disease, the antibodies are already in place. The body is all ready to fight, and the person doesn’t get sick.

Children need to be immunized when they are young because many diseases can strike at an early age, making the illness more serious. For example, half the children under six months old who get whooping cough must be hospitalized.

Today, we can protect children from 14 serious diseases: bacterial meningitis, chickenpox, diphtheria, the flu (especially important in light of the recent H1N1 concerns), German measles, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, measles, mumps, pneumonia, polio, lockjaw, rotavirus, and whooping cough. (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention publishes a schedule of vaccine recommendations for each age group.) While some of these diseases are rare in the United States, they do exist in other parts of the world even today, so vaccines are still necessary.

Watching a child get a shot can be painful for a mom or dad. Keeping appointments can be troublesome. Communication presents a challenge for some. But vaccines keep our children healthy -- making immunizations well worth the effort.

August Is National Immunization Awareness Month

Prayer: God of love and life, I thank you for my children. Help me teach them how to take good care of themselves. Bless them with good health. Amen.

Meet Lynn Mohr

Mohr is a Pediatric Clinical Nurse Specialist at Advocate Hope Children’s Hospital. She has been a nurse for almost 30 years.

When asked about immunizations, Lynn Mohr advises her patients as well as her friends, “Be educated! I encourage people to have background information before they go for the immunizations.”

There is no reason for parents to hesitate asking questions, Mohr insists. “This is what we’re here for. And most pediatrician’s offices will give you a booklet to help you track what’s needed when.” Although each state may have slightly different requirements and timing, such booklets are helpful to earnest parents unfamiliar with immunization practices.

“Vaccines are especially important if you are leaving the USA,” Mohr warns. “You need different immunizations in different countries. You can find out specifics by contacting a travel clinic; they are all over the country. Just keep in mind that immunizations are not solely for kids.” Mohr herself learned this when she traveled to Africa and was required to get certain vaccines in order to enter.

In addition to immunizations required for traveling, adults also need tetanus shots. “Keep track. Tetanus shots are valid only for 10 years,” Mohr reminds. “Consider getting vaccines for shingles and, for college kids, meningitis, too.”

Mohr is proud of Hope Children’s Hospital’s Ronald McDonald Care Mobile and its work with immunizations. “For some young patients, basic medical care must come to them. Jackie Evans goes to the neighborhoods, to the schools. She’s out in the community. It’s very cool,” Mohr says.

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