IMMUNIZATIONS – A parent's guide

With the school year beginning, your young child or teenager may be advised or even required to get certain vaccinations. The following is a brief update on the currently available childhood vaccinations and what they prevent. Additionally, we have included a synopsis of the latest information regarding ***mercury*** and vaccines as well and ***autism*** and vaccines. Please call us or visit our website for further information.

Why vaccinate my child?

Although newborn babies are immune to many diseases because of the antibodies received from their mother, this immunity is likely not enough. First, it is short-lived, only lasting 1 month to 1 year. Second, depending on the mother's immune system, infants may not have immunity to diseases that are prevented by vaccines such as whooping cough, chicken pox, and hepatitis. Third, immunizing a child also helps to protect the community, especially those who have no immunity. An individual may lack immunity because they are too young for the vaccine, cannot receive the vaccine for medical reasons (for example leukemia), and those who do not make adequate antibodies even after receiving the vaccine. Last, immunizations can also slow or stops disease outbreaks.

Mercury and Vaccines

It is important to note that, although the American Academy of Pediatrics and vaccine manufactures have agreed that thimerosal (a mercury containing preservative) should be reduced or eliminated in vaccines, this is only a precautionary measure. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), there is ***no convincing evidence of harm*** caused by low dose thimerosal in vaccines. Recent estimates found that approximately 1 in 150 children are affected with autism spectrum disorders. This number has increased over the past 20 years and is, by some, thought to be related to the increase exposure to thimerosal from the addition of new recommended vaccines. However, several studies examining trends in vaccine use and autism frequency do not support these beliefs. Autism is an important health concern that requires continued research in hopes of finding avoidable causes/triggers and improved treatment. However, at this point, one of those causes does not appear to be thimerosal.

MMR and Autism

In 1998, a study of autistic children suggested a connection between the MMR vaccine and autism. However, in 2004, 10 of the 13 authors of that study retracted the interpretation. They felt that the ***data was not sufficient*** to establish a causal link between the MMR vaccine and autism. One of the study's limitations was its size. The authors only studied 12 children, too few to make objective generalizations about the cause of autism. Furthermore, other larger studies have found no relationship between the MMR vaccine and autism stating that the percentage of children with autism who received the vaccine was the same as the percentage of unaffected children who received the vaccine.

What am I protecting my child from?

It seems like the number of recommended vaccines, and therefore **SHOTS**, keeps going up. Do our children really need these? The next page lists the current recommended immunizations and the diseases/symptoms that they can cause. Keep in mind that some of these vaccinations are given in combination to minimize the actual number of shots. *If you have any concerns about these, talk to your doctor.*

DTaP – Diptheria: can infect the throat with a thick covering that can lead to problems breathing, paralysis, and heart failure. Tetanus (Lockjaw): painful tightening of muscles, seizures, and paralysis. Pertussis (Whooping Cough): severe coughing spells, pneumonia, seizures, brain damage, and death.

Hepatitis A – usually mild flu-like symptoms, can cause jaundice, severe stomach pain and diarrhea, easily spread to others in the home

Hepatitis B – liver damage, possible liver cancer and death

HIB (Haemophilus influenza type B) – meningitis, pneumonia, severe swelling of the throat, infections of the blood, joint, bones, and heart

HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) – cervical cancer, genital warts, other abnormal and precancerous genital lesions

Influenza (Flu) – mild to severe illness, possibly leading to death – this is given yearly since the strains of flu virus change yearly – getting this does **NOT** mean your child will not get sick at all – it is an attempt to keep them immune to the most serious strains of the virus

Meningococcal – bacterial meningitis, seizures, death

MMR – Measles: respiratory infection with rash and flu-like symptoms, more severe disease causes ear infection, pneumonia, seizures, and brain damage. Mumps: fever, headache, swollen glands (especially salivary), deafness, meningitis, swelling of the testes/ovaries, and infertility. Rubella (German Measles): infection of the skin and lymph nodes, arthritis, if contracted during pregnancy, may cause birth defects.

Pneumoccal – meningitis, blood infection, some ear infections

Polio – paralysis, death

Rotavirus – viral gastroenteritis – a stomach and intestinal infection that can result in severe diarrhea, vomiting, fever, and serious dehydration

Varicella (Chicken Pox) – itchy blisters, fever, complications include skin infection, scarring, brain swelling, pneumonia