



GET SMART Newsletter

This month's topic:
Childhood vaccinations

September 2016

One Less Worry...

Daniel Duplantier, parent, Washington D.C.

I have two kids under the age of 3. As my friends prepare to become parents, they ask, “What is the biggest change in your life now that you’re a parent?” My simple answer is “worry.” My wife and I worry about many aspects related to raising our youngsters, such as their nutrition, education, happiness, avoiding bumps and bruises as they learn to walk, and creating quality family time. We are always worrying about something, and we’re not alone. Judging by the number of parenting sites, message boards and social media sites, it seems like ours is a universal affliction among those caring for young children.

We take our son to a fantastic child care facility close to our home. He is making friends, learning so much, and his speech and vocabulary have exploded. But, like all children his age, he is exposed to just about every germ you can imagine. Toddlers share everything: toys, bottles, snacks, handfuls of dirt and cool rocks. And nearly all of those things go from one kid’s mouth to another. Even the best child care facilities and early learning centers struggle with keeping a germ-free environment. Recently, a stomach bug swept through our area. My entire family fell ill. My son vomited so much it scared my wife and me.

Luckily, it was a quick 24-hour sickness, but seeing your children sick is every parent’s worst nightmare. I cannot imagine them becoming ill with something more serious.



An advisement we have chosen to embrace is taking our kids for appointments for all recommended vaccinations.

We are deeply troubled when we hear people, especially other parents, question the importance of vaccines. It has been said that vaccines are a victim of their own success; they work so well you do not notice their impact in your life. I think this is true of any great invention. Think about smart phones. It was not that long ago when people did not have an amazing computer in their pocket. Now it is hard to imagine a life without them. A little device has improved our lives so much, yet we do not think about it. We just accept it as having always been there. Smart phones and vaccines are also alike in that it is better if everyone has one. Hanging out with someone who doesn’t have a smart phone makes it harder to share music, photos and ideas. Vaccines are most effective when everyone is vaccinated. This community benefit is called “herd immunity.”

For a more thorough discussion of the benefits of vaccines, I encourage everyone to [read this article](#) written a few years ago for Wired Magazine. There are also government and advocacy websites with excellent information and resources to keep people informed and up-to-date on their vaccinations from [Vaccines.gov](#), the [CDC](#) and the [Every Child by Two](#) organization.

Childhood Vaccinations

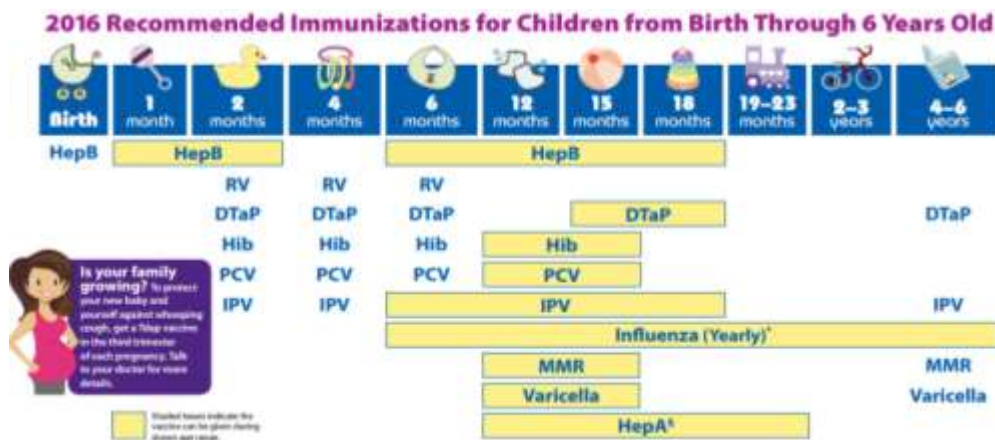
Cynthia Callaghan, CRNP, service coordinator for physical health for the DART and Head Start Programs, Allegheny Intermediate Unit

Vaccines are the best way to protect people of all ages from certain diseases. They are recommended throughout a person's lifetime. Vaccines do not only prevent disease in the individual who is vaccinated; they also protect others in the community who are unable to be vaccinated due to being too young to receive vaccinations or having weakened immune systems. A vaccinated person will not spread disease to them.

When viruses or bacteria enter a person's body, they cause illness. After your body is exposed to a particular germ, a healthy immune system remembers the disease when it is exposed later. Vaccines imitate infections without causing the person to become sick. The body's immune system develops a response to the vaccine, just as if exposure to the actual disease occurred. Then, when the person is exposed to that particular infection in the future, the person can fight off the infection because it is already recognized as something which is invading the body.

As of May 2016, there are vaccines for 16 diseases: HepB (hepatitis B), RV (rotavirus), DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis or whooping cough), Hib (Haemophilus influenza type b- meningitis, pneumonia, epiglottitis), PCV (pneumococcal conjugate), IPV (polio), influenza, MMR (measles, mumps, rubella), varicella (chicken pox), and HepA (hepatitis A). The vaccine schedule is designed by a group of physicians known as ACIP (Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices). They are recommended to be given at times when the best response can occur. The schedule is also designed to give as much protection as soon as possible; thus, most are recommended in early childhood.

The best resource to find out more information on this topic is www.cdc.gov/vaccines.



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