



## **WHY DO WE VACCINATE CHILDREN? IT'S ALL ABOUT PREVENTION!**

Our immune system is our body's way of preventing disease. We are born with an immune system that is composed of many cells, organs and glands throughout our bodies that house our immune system. In these systems harmful bacteria, fungi, and viruses are recognized as foreign "antigens" and our body produces antibodies to fight them off. Overtime, we build up our immune systems the more things we are exposed to.

Historically, many children died before their fifth birthdays (take a look at any historical cemetery and you will see this many tombstones of infants, toddlers, and young children) and this continues today in many third world countries. Since the advent of vaccines and vaccination programs, the numbers have decreased due to the creation of now preventable diseases like tetanus, polio, measles, etc. Vaccines contain the same antigens (or parts of them) that cause diseases, so it prepares your body to one day fight off the actual antigen when exposed by helping it create antibodies now. The process takes time. You do not immediately produce the antibody upon vaccination. It will take a couple of weeks for your body to make the antibodies and some vaccines require multiple exposures to it in order to produce this result (known as *vaccine series*). But these antibodies will often give life long or close to it immunity. For vaccines that do not give lifelong immunity, booster (extra) doses are required at some point. For children, it is best to achieve immunity without getting sick simply by getting vaccinated.

Immunizing children not only helps protect the child, but also the community at large. This applies to routine childhood vaccines as well as the now available Covid-19 vaccines. It helps protect individuals who cannot receive vaccines themselves because they are either too young or have medical issues that do not allow them to be vaccinated. In addition to the health benefits to your child and society at large, by vaccinating you as a parent or guardian are also less likely to have to lose days from work having

to stay home and care for them as well as decreased hospitalization and overall stress. Also, your child will not be absent from school for sickness from preventable diseases.

During this pandemic, many individuals have stopped vaccinating, and due to this many preventable diseases are coming back (i.e., measles). Please take the time and visit your pediatrician. He/she is trained and can answer all of your questions and concerns with regards to routine childhood immunizations and checkups.

As always, when you have questions, be sure to discuss them with your pediatrician who can guide you and help keep your children healthy.

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