Immunization Information

Immunizations are a proven way of preventing the most common, serious communicable diseases of childhood. In accordance with the guidelines established through the American Academy of Pediatrics and the United States Public Health Service, we feel every child should receive these important vaccines.

**DTaP**

Diphtheria, tetanus (lockjaw), and pertussis (whooping cough) are acute infections primarily of children but they can also occur in adults.

Diphtheria is an infection of the nose and throat which is spread from person-to-person. It is a serious illness with a 10% mortality rate. Only immunization prevents diphtheria.

Pertussis attacks the lower airway and produces the “whooping” cough of children. It is primarily a disease of children less than 5 years of age with more than half requiring hospitalization. For every 1,000 reported pertussis cases, 40 develop convulsions and four develop encephalitis.

Tetanus is a disease caused by a toxin from bacteria which grow at the site of injuries. Though medicine is helpful in treating this disease, a 50% mortality rate still exists. Only immunization prevents tetanus.

The combination vaccine called DTaP protects against all three diseases. Several doses are necessary to build up full immunity. A primary series of immunizations is given in infancy followed by boosters to age five years. Thereafter, booster doses for diphtheria and tetanus are given every ten years.

With DTaP vaccine, most children will have a slight fever and be irritable within two days after getting the shot. One half develop some soreness and swelling at the injection site. More serious side effects may occur such as high-pitched persistent crying for more than three hours, excessive sleepiness or difficulty in rousing the infant, limpness or paleness, temperature greater than 105 degrees, convulsions. Rarely, encephalitis occurs once in every 310,000 shots.

Immunizations remain the only way to prevent pertussis, diphtheria and tetanus. The benefits far outweigh the risks.

**Polio**

Polio is a viral infection that often causes permanent paralysis. It is fatal in about ten percent of patients. Thousands of cases and deaths occurred annually in the United States before the polio vaccine was first widely used in the mid-1950's. Since then, general use of polio vaccines has virtually eliminated the disease.

The polio vaccine is now given by injection and several doses are needed to build up immunity. Polio vaccine generally produces few side effects. A very rare complication (one in five to ten million doses) of the live oral vaccine was the development of paralysis. For this reason, the killed injectable vaccine is now recommended for routine
immunizations. Oral polio vaccine should not be used when a person receiving cancer chemotherapy resides in the home.

The benefit of being protected against polio greatly outweighs any risk from the polio vaccine.

**Hemophilus Influenzae Type b (HIB)**

H. influenzae type b is a leading cause of serious widespread bacterial disease in the United States. It is a common cause of bacterial meningitis, primarily among children under five years of age. In addition, it causes infection in the blood stream, skin, joints, bone, heart, and life threatening throat infections. In the United States approximately one of every 1000 children under five years of age develops Hib disease each year.

Approximately 25 to 40% of Hib disease occurs among children 18 months of age or older, and 25% occurs above 24 months of age. It is recommended that children be vaccinated against Hib disease beginning at 2 months of age. The side effects from Hib vaccine are an occasional low grade fever and/or swelling at the injection site, usually within the first 24 hours. The benefit of being protected against Hib far outweighs the risk of the vaccine.

**Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)**

Hepatitis B virus is one of several causes of liver infections. Chronic hepatitis afflicts over one million Americans, and thousands die each year of complications. It is now recommended that all infants and adolescents be immunized with Hepatitis B vaccine.

The vaccine is given as a series of three injections, which can be given along with other immunizations. A booster may be required later in life. HBV is safe and effective. The most common side effects are tenderness and swelling at the injection site, and a few mild flu-like symptoms. No serious reactions have been reported.

We strongly recommend your taking advantage of the opportunity to protect your child from Hepatitis B.

**Measles**

Measles is the most serious of the common childhood diseases. Complications such as deafness, blindness, convulsion, and brain damage have occurred in approximately one in a thousand cases. Prior to the availability of the measles vaccine, there were 400 deaths annually in the United States. Measles vaccine is highly effective and is given at 12-15 months, with a booster at five years. It is usually a combination with the vaccines for mumps and rubella (German Measles).

Approximately 5% of children develop a mild rash or have a fever 7-12 days after receiving the vaccine. Should your child develop a very high or persistent fever, or show other signs of illness, our office should be contacted. Very rarely, once in a million doses, the vaccine has caused encephalitis. The benefits of being protected against measles outweigh any risk from measles vaccine.

**Mumps**
Mumps is a disease that causes swelling and pain of the salivary glands in the face and neck. It is one of the leading causes of deafness in children. The complication occurs once in every 300-400 cases. Occasionally, the disease in males causes inflammation of the testicles. Mumps vaccine is highly effective, and one injection produces long-lasting, possibly lifelong protection. It is recommended for children at 12-15 months with a booster at five years. It is most often given in combination with the vaccine for measles and rubella (German Measles). Mumps vaccine occasionally causes a mild, brief fever. It is not known to produce any serious side effects. The benefit of being protected against mumps greatly outweighs any risk from the mumps vaccine.

Rubella

Rubella (German Measles) is a common, usually mild infection of childhood, but it can occur at any age. The pregnant woman who gets rubella may miscarry or have a child born with deformities. Reducing the risk of rubella in pregnancy is the major benefit of prevention of rubella in children.

Rubella vaccine is highly effective and one injection produces long-lasting, possibly lifelong protection. It is recommended for children at 12-15 months with a booster at five years. It is commonly given at the same time as vaccines against other diseases such as measles and mumps.

Rubella vaccine can produce a mild rash or joint pain and joint swelling in five percent of children and 10 percent of adults. The benefits of being protected against rubella and reducing spread of rubella to pregnant women greatly outweigh any risk from rubella vaccine.

Prevnar (pneumococcal vaccine)

The pneumococcus bacteria is the most common cause of bacterial meningitis, pneumonia, and blood stream infections in children under five years of age. The pneumococcal vaccine, Prevnar, provides a very safe, effective means of helping to prevent these serious bacterial infections. The AAP recommends that all children under 2 years of age receive Prevnar, as they are most at risk for pneumococcal disease. It is also recommended for children two to five years of age considered at high risk, such as those with sickle cell disease, HIV, and those with a compromised immune system.

Varivax (chickenpox vaccine)

Chickenpox is a common disease of childhood caused by a virus. It is very contagious. If exposed to chickenpox, your child may develop symptoms from 10 days to 3 weeks later.

Chickenpox usually starts with a mild fever for 1-2 days, followed by eruption of small fluid-filled blisters of the skin. They may also occur in the scalp, mouth, eye, and genital areas. These blisters break easily and become scab covered sores which usually itch. Crops of blisters continue to erupt for 3-7 days and during this time your child may easily infect other people who have not had chickenpox. Children who have chickenpox are contagious until all blisters have crusted over.
Because chickenpox is a viral infection, there is no specific treatment available. General treatment is aimed at relieving the discomfort of itching.

In 1995, the American Academy of Pediatrics endorsed the use of Varivax for the prevention of chickenpox. It is 98% effective and is given at 12 months of age or later.