

Health News You Can Use

“For your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit in you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own... You were bought with a price; therefore; glorify God in your body.” (I Corinthians, 6:19-20)

The Nurse Corps features health news you can use to promote wholistic health—physical, mental, spiritual, social, and total body wellness.

AUGUST: National Immunization Awareness Month



Vaccines: The Basics

Vaccines contain the same germs that cause disease. (For example, measles vaccine contains measles virus, and Hib vaccine contains Hib bacteria.) But they have been either killed or weakened to the point that they don't make you sick. Some vaccines contain only a part of the disease germ.

How Vaccines Prevent Disease

A vaccine stimulates your immune system to produce antibodies, exactly like it would if you were exposed to the disease. After getting vaccinated, you develop immunity to that disease, without having to get the disease first. This is what makes vaccines such powerful medicine. Unlike most medicines, which treat or cure diseases, vaccines prevent them.

Vaccine Side Effects and Risks

Like any medication, vaccines can cause side effects. Most common side effects are usually mild, such as redness and swelling at the injection site. These symptoms should go away within a few days. If your child experiences a reaction at the injection site, one can apply a cool, wet cloth to reduce redness, soreness, and swelling.

Serious side effects following vaccination, such as severe allergic reaction, are very rare and doctors and clinic staff are trained to deal with them. Pay extra attention to your child for a few days after vaccination to ensure that side effects go away. If you see something that concerns you, call your child's doctor.

Vaccine Ingredients

Today, except for some flu vaccines, none of the childhood vaccines used routinely in the United States contain mercury (thimerosal) as a preservative. Although no evidence suggests that there are safety concerns with thimerosal, vaccine manufacturers stopped using it as a precautionary measure. Now, it is contained in very tiny amounts only in multi-dose vials of flu vaccine. Thimerosal is necessary in vaccines that come in multi-dose vials because they require that each individual vaccine dose be drawn from the vial with a new needle and syringe to minimize introduction of germs into the vial.

Ensuring Vaccine Safety

The United States' long-standing vaccine safety system ensures that vaccines are as safe as possible. In fact, currently, the United States has the safest, most effective vaccine supply in its history.

Safety monitoring begins with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), who ensures the safety, effectiveness, and availability of vaccines for the United States. Before a vaccine is approved by the FDA for use by the public, results of studies on safety and effectiveness of the vaccine are evaluated by highly trained FDA scientists and doctors. FDA also inspects the sites where vaccines are made to make sure they follow strict manufacturing guidelines.

Let's do our part in stamping-out infectious diseases by getting immunized across our lifespan and by encouraging others to do so!