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Five Things Every Parent Should Know About Vaccinating Their Children

Family Physicians address common questions and misconceptions about childhood vaccines for parents

EDITOR'S NOTE: Audio and video of Michigan Family Physicians speaking about the importance of vaccinations is available [HERE](#).

LANSING – Amid the rise in vaccine hesitancy and misinformation circulating, the Michigan Academy of Family Physicians is sharing the five most important things every parent should know about vaccinating their children.

“Michigan family physicians are proud to be a trusted resource and source of credible information for our patients, including on the very important topic of childhood vaccinations,” said **Bashar Yalldo, MD**, president of MAFP and family physician in Howell. “There is unfortunately lots of confusion and misconceptions out there about vaccines and we want parents to know they can always come to us for honest, evidence-based answers to their questions.”

To cut through all the confusing and sometimes conflicting information, family physicians from MAFP have provided the following tips for Michigan parents:

1) Vaccines ARE much, much safer than the diseases themselves.

- Vaccines work by helping the body identify potential infections, so that the immune system can fight diseases faster and more effectively when exposed. They go through rigorous, ongoing scrutiny long after clinical trials conclude.

2) Vaccines ARE effective, preventing serious illness and death, even if sickness still occurs.

- Vaccines significantly reduce the likelihood of getting sick from infectious diseases and, in many cases also greatly reduce transmission. A common misconception is that if you get sick, the vaccine didn't work. Most vaccines can't prevent all infections from starting, but will lessen the severity of illness and risk of complications.

3) Vaccines DO NOT cause autism.

- This rumor has been dispelled by many studies. Huge, robust studies (spanning millions of children across many countries) have not found a causal link between autism and vaccines.

4) Children DO get more vaccines than in the past and that it based on advancements in science

- Children do get more vaccines than in the past and that it is ok! We have gotten better at developing vaccines and targeting immune protection more efficiently. Advances in medical research have also led to many new vaccines that have further reduced childhood illnesses.

5) Children DO need vaccines even though diseases are less common than in the past

- Although many diseases are no longer widespread in most U.S. communities, children still need vaccines to maintain their immunity especially since many of these diseases are only a plane trip away. Without getting vaccinated, the risks of these diseases coming back will grow.

Dr. Jennifer Morse, medical director for Central Michigan, Mid-Michigan, and District Health Department #10 and Assistant Professor at the Michigan State University College of Human Medicine reminded parents:

“Despite recent headlines, the science behind vaccines and what’s needed to keep your children safe from preventable death and serious illness has not changed. Vaccine hesitancy threatens health and community safety and it’s critical that parents are armed with accurate information, which family physicians are always ready to provide.”

Currently, only 68% of children 19 through 35 months of age have received all the recommended vaccinations, according to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. In March 2019, that rate was 73.5% for children in that same age group.

Dr. Beena Nagappala, family physician in Clinton Township with Cornerstone Medical Group, stressed that children still really do need those childhood vaccinations, even though the diseases are less common now, stressed that:

“To maintain immunity, children need vaccinations, as these diseases are still prevalent in other parts of the world. The success of near elimination of these diseases is a testament to how well vaccines work. We encourage parents to do their research and seek out your family physician if you have questions.”

Over the last 30 years, vaccines have prevented more than one million deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Being up to date on immunizations is the best way to be protected against preventable diseases.

“Vaccines significantly reduce the likelihood of getting sick from infectious diseases and, in many cases also greatly reduce spread of disease,” **said Dr. William Nettleton**, Associate Professor in Family and Community Medicine at Western Michigan University Homer Stryker MD School of Medicine and Medical Director of Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department and Calhoun County Public Health Department. “Even the healthiest child can get really sick and even die from preventable diseases such as measles. We urge parents to seek credible information from their family doctor and get vaccinated before preventable sickness or death occurs.”

Childhood immunizations are readily accessible and available to Michiganders. Parents can obtain them by making appointments with their family physician to keep themselves, their loved ones, and others they come in contact with safe. Immunizations are also accessible at local health departments, health centers located within schools, and pharmacies, and some school districts are hosting immunization fairs.

Michigan Academy of Family Physicians is the state’s largest medical specialty, representing more than 4,200 family physicians, family medicine residents, and medical students across the state. For more information, visit www.mafp.com