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Immunizations: Preventing Disabilities

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IMMUNIZATIONS: PREVENTING DISABILITIES

One of the best ways to protect your child from developing serious diseases or disabilities is to keep your children’s immunizations up to date.

It is fairly easy to keep your baby or toddler’s vaccinations on schedule due to the frequent doctor’s visits, but there are several vaccines that adolescents and teens should get, as well. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has downloadable Child & Adolescent Immunization Schedules that will help parents keep their child’s immunizations current.

Did you know that immunizations can prevent the following diseases and potential disabilities?

- **Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (DTaP)**
  Diphtheria: A very dangerous throat infection that can make it hard to breathe and can cause paralysis or heart failure.
  Tetanus: Also known as lockjaw. It makes a person unable to open the mouth or swallow and causes severe muscle spasms.
  Pertussis: Also known as whooping cough. It causes prolonged coughing and can lead to pneumonia, seizures or brain damage.

- **Haemophilus influenzae b (Hib)**
  Do not confuse this with common flu viruses. Before this vaccine, Hib was the major cause of meningitis in children.

- **Pneumococcal (PCV)**
  A serious disease that can lead to infections of the lungs, blood or brain. This bacteria can cause deafness or even death.

- **Hepatitis B (HepB)**
  This is a serious infection of the liver that can lead to liver failure, chronic liver disease or liver cancer.

- **Polio (IPV/OPV)**
  This disease can cause paralysis and life-long disabilities.

- **Chicken Pox (Varicella)**
  A common complication of chickenpox is a bacterial infection of the skin. Chickenpox may also lead to pneumonia or, rarely, an inflammation of the brain (encephalitis), both of which can be very serious. Close to 100 children die each year in the U.S. from problems due to chickenpox.

- **Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)**
  Measles: A serious viral infection causing high fever, cough and rash. May also cause pneumonia, infection of the brain, meningitis or death. It is worse in babies than in older children.

  Mumps: An infection causing fever, headache and painful swollen glands under the jaw. Can also cause brain complications.
Rubella: An infection causing a rash, mild fever, swollen glands and arthritis. If a pregnant woman contracts this disease, she could lose the baby or the baby could have serious birth defects such as deafness, blindness, heart disease and brain damage.