How to prevent measles in your child



With measles, Benjamin Franklin's old saying, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," holds. Unfortunately, pediatricians don't have any medication that kills the measles virus. Children who are hospitalized are given support, but nothing to kill the germ. For instance, pediatricians may give oxygen to children with measles pneumonia. Pediatricians may also give Vitamin A to help prevent blindness from measles, but again, vitamins do not stop the germ.

Giving your child the MMR (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella) vaccine is the best and most natural method to prevent measles. Immunizations prompt a body's own immune system to make antibodies. These "germ fighters" are ready to defend your child when a nasty virus like measles appears. Pediatricians give this vaccine according to a tried and true

vaccine schedule at 12-15 months of age and again at 4-6 years of age. The recent death of an unvaccinated child from measles in Texas serves as a tragic reminder of the risks of not vaccinating.

How nasty is this virus?

Pretty nasty. About 1 in 5 people infected with measles end up in the hospital, and pneumonia strikes about 1 out of about every 20 children with measles. If you think about a classroom of children, that’s a lot of kids.

Also, with measles, Friedrich Nietzsche’s old saying, “What does not kill you makes you stronger,” does not necessarily hold. Measles can cause “immune amnesia.” This means that measles causes your body to “forget” about prior viral infections. Remember your child’s first year of daycare when they seemed to catch “everything?” Surviving measles could mean that your child can “catch everything” again. You can read more about this problem here.

For information on what symptoms to watch for, read the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia’s recent post about measles.

For more vaccine information, please refer back to our prior post about how vaccines work.

We kicked this ugly disease out of the United States once; we can do it again!

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