

HOW IMPORTANT ARE VACCINES?

Ask the Johnsons.

Measles

When our son Vaughn developed a rash after a vacation to Mexico, it never occurred to us that it could be measles. After all, we didn't think measles was around anymore. We were wrong. In addition to the rash, Vaughn developed a high fever, ear infections, conjunctivitis and sores in his mouth. A few days later I also came down with a rash, flu-like symptoms and sores in my mouth. Doctors confirmed that Vaughn and I had measles, a vaccine-preventable disease.

Vaughn was hospitalized for four days and I was the sickest I've ever been. Sadly, Vaughn was not protected against measles. We delayed the vaccine because he had chronic ear infections, a decision we came to regret. Like us, many parents fail to realize that measles still exists in other countries, and the United States continues to experience outbreaks, especially in communities where many people are unimmunized. Fortunately, there is a safe and effective vaccine that can protect your child. We wished we had made Vaughn's vaccinations a priority and want to remind parents of the importance of immunizations.



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Think measles is just a harmless childhood illness? Think again.

Sadly, many parents mistakenly believe measles is a harmless childhood illness. However, measles should not be taken lightly. It can cause high fever, seizures, dehydration, diarrhea, ear infections, pneumonia, brain inflammation and even death. Pneumonia is particularly concerning given that it causes 60% of deaths from measles. Moreover, measles illness during pregnancy can cause serious complications including premature labor, miscarriage and low birth weight babies.

Measles – the disease that just won't go away.

Before the vaccine was introduced in the late 1960's, nearly half a million people suffered from measles each year. The vaccine was successful in nearly eradicating the disease. However, just last year, more than 222 people in the United States had measles, most of whom were unvaccinated children and adults. In Europe, things are much worse – 36 countries have experienced measles outbreaks and more than 30,000 people have had measles, posing a risk to U.S. travelers who are not protected.

Vaccines singlehandedly offer the best protection.

As parents, we try to protect our children. Vaccines are one of the best tools available to help us do so. While it was suggested in the late 1990's that the MMR vaccine might cause autism, this claim has been completely disproven. The MMR vaccine is safe and effective. Vaccines for infants and children are intended to protect them at a time when they need it most. After all, the risk of complications and death from measles is higher among infants and young children. Fortunately, you can protect your child with a vaccine.

We watched our child suffer needlessly from a vaccine-preventable disease. We hope that you never have to experience the same. We never thought our child could contract a disease like measles – a disease we didn't know still existed. Don't underestimate the risk and seriousness of measles like we did. The best way to protect your child is to immunize them – on time, every time.

Find out more at www.vaccine.texaschildrens.org



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