

VACCINES CREATE HEALTHIER CHILDREN

Despite the worldwide controversy over the benefits of vaccines, more children today are healthier with fewer chronic diseases and longer lives than 50 years ago before vaccines became prevalent, reports the Center for Disease Control.

Vaccination provides infants and small children with active immunity, similar to exposure to a disease, but usually without getting sick. Active immunity occurs when antibodies are produced in response to receiving a portion of a killed or weakened disease organism. The body creates the immunities necessary to fight off the disease and prevent infection or re-infection.

The best way to prepare your children's health future to be bright is to make certain they are immunized with all the age-appropriate vaccines, fed as many fresh fruits, fresh vegetables and protein sources as possible, recommends Holley Rauen, RN, manager of the Lee County Health Department's Health Promotion Program. Feed them few processed foods, few sugars and other carbohydrates, get them physically active several times a day and have their health checked regularly by a doctor.

The CDC reports vaccine schedules are reevaluated annually to determine what age range is considered optimal for producing the best immune system response. Also evaluated is the number of vaccinations that can be effectively and safely given to a child at one time.

Currently the schedule calls for nine vaccines to be administered before a child's first birthday, and some are given in several doses. Nine vaccines are also recommended for children ages 12 months to 6 years old.

While childhood immunizations can be given at any physician's office as a convenience for patients, they are also given free and without appointments through the Lee County Health Department as follows:

- ❖ 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Mon. through Thurs. and 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Fri. at 3920 Michigan Avenue, Fort Myers
- ❖ 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. the first and third Wed. of each month at 83 Pondella Road, North Fort Myers
- ❖ 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. the first Tues. of each month at First Presbyterian Church, 9751 Bonita Beach Road, Bonita Springs
- ❖ 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. the first Thurs. of each month at 5624 8th Street West, Suite 106, Lehigh Acres.