

Immunization/Vaccination / God's protection

Tammy: Is getting vaccinated really all that important today? Stay with us as we talk about this very important topic.

Carol: Welcome to Women of Hope. It's good to have this time together again. Not long ago I met a man who was intelligent and really has his life together. He's in his mid-forties but is confined to a wheel chair.

Tammy: Why? What happened to him?

Carol: When he was a child he suffered from polio. I was impressed with how he has coped with his disability.

Tammy: I wonder how he got polio.

Carol: He told me that his parents assumed that he did not need to be immunized. They lived in a wealthy neighborhood and believed that it was safe and healthy. But sadly for all of them this did not make any difference.

Tammy: Today we're talking about Immunizations. You don't hear of many people these days getting polio do you Carol? So, does that mean that everyone is safe now, and we don't need to take our children to have vaccinations against polio?

Carol: No, it's still very important to be vaccinated against polio. And you're right there are not nearly as many as there were in the past because over the years so many people have been vaccinated. Some people may think that it's not important any more.

Tammy: And there are other highly infectious diseases that our children need protection from. Just so we all understand this, why don't you share what infectious means?

Carol: OK. It means that it's a disease caused by an infection of some kind. The germs that cause the disease can be passed to another person – so we say the disease is 'contagious'.

Tammy: Let's share what some of the other common contagious diseases are?

Carol: There's Tetanus – which is caused by a germ that enters the body through a cut. It can affect the muscles of the body and make the jaw lock so you can't open it. It may even lead to death. Then there is whooping cough – a very bad cough which can be passed on to others. It can affect the brain of a child under six.

Tammy: Most of us know about Measles that produces a rash all over the body together with fever and cough that is also very easily passed to others. And then there's Mumps. This causes swelling of the salivary glands under the jaw which is quite painful and can have lasting bad effects on the body.

Carol: Another one is Diphtheria - a disease of the throat that infects the mouth, nose and throat. And there's also Tuberculosis – or TB.

It's very important for our children to have vaccinations against these diseases so that they cannot catch them from other people. I wonder if your doctor or health care worker has told you about the

vaccinations your children should have. Most vaccinations are given by an injection with a needle. So, are your children protected?

Tammy: We can hear all about protecting ourselves from Katie. She will tell us how these infectious childhood diseases can be prevented through vaccinations.

Carol: Yes, do stay with us.

Tammy: Welcome back to *Women of Hope*. Hello Katie. Thank you so much for coming over today.

Katie: Thank you Tammy. I'm glad to be able to talk about this topic today. It's one that's really important to me as a nurse and as a mother.

If you are a mother do you remember when your first child was born? I do. I felt it was a miracle. The little boy wrapped in cloth was tiny with tiny fingers and toes. I couldn't help but be filled with wonder at every single feature as he lay in my arms so very helpless.

Within the first week, I had to take him for his first injection. It was the vaccine that prevents Tuberculosis. Watching the dose being injected, brought tears to my eyes. He cried so pathetically. You must have felt the same. Why, we wonder, do such small babies have to be made to cry with pain. But then it is necessary isn't it? It is very, very important for us to have our children vaccinated. How else can we protect them from the many diseases that they might catch?

Carol: Tell us doctor, what is a vaccine?

Katie: Vaccines are preparations that contain dead or weakened germs that cause the disease. As we said, most vaccinations are given by injection. Some vaccines are given by mouth like the vaccine for polio. It was first discovered that smallpox or cowpox could be prevented through vaccines. Isn't it good that we can protect our babies this way?

Carol: How do vaccines work?

Katie: When your child is given a vaccine, the dead or weakened germ isn't strong enough to give them the disease. But it is enough to trick the body into producing antibodies for that disease. The body then thinks that it's had the disease and builds up its own protective antibodies to fight the infection, if it is exposed to it. This is called immunity...so we sometimes say the child has been 'immunized' against the disease.

Carol: Does it hurt the child when they are given an injection?

Katie: Yes, it does, but the pain only lasts a moment and can be relieved with medication or cold compress on the area if needed.

Carol: What about side effects? Doesn't the baby normally have fever after an injection?

Katie: Yes, some side effects are common. The child might have a fever, or redness around the area. They may cry a lot and not eat very well for a while. But if the child was to catch the actual disease it would be much worse than any side effects they might get. Childhood diseases can have long-term effects for many of those who survive them. They can even cause death.

Carol: But doctor, why do we have to be vaccinated for diseases that no one gets today, like polio and diphtheria?

Katie: The reason few people get these diseases now is because so many have been vaccinated against them. But this should not stop you from being vaccinated. The truth is that these diseases are still present and people still get sick with them, usually among those who are not immunized. These diseases actually kill babies or may leave them severely crippled.

Carol: Is it important to have your child vaccinated even if those around her have been vaccinated?

Katie: Absolutely. If children who are not vaccinated travel to areas where these diseases still exist, they can catch the disease and become seriously ill or die. And your child is vaccinated it helps protect others. Children who can't be vaccinated because of illness or allergies depend on others to keep them safe. If the people around the sick child are vaccinated, they can't spread the disease to the child. It is only safe to stop vaccinations for a particular disease when that disease has been eradicated worldwide. That means the disease does not exist any more - as with smallpox.

Carol: What if a child is sick when it's time for their vaccination?

Katie: Even if a child is mildly sick, the doctor may choose to go ahead with the vaccination. If the child is very sick the doctor may choose not to vaccinate as he will not be able to tell if the resulting fever is from the cold or illness or from the vaccine.

Carol: Are vaccinations expensive?

Katie: Look at it this way. Say a child who is ill with a contagious disease can't go to school, parents or caregivers must stay home to look after them. Add to that the cost of visits to the doctor, medicines and hospitalization. The cost of a baby vaccination is much less than all those costs put together, wouldn't you agree?

Carol: So, are vaccines safe?

Katie: Yes. A great deal of study has gone into vaccines. It has been proven that they work and are safe. Since the start of widespread vaccinations, the number of cases of childhood illnesses like measles, polio and diphtheria has come down dramatically. Vaccination can prevent millions of children from catching deadly diseases and can save many lives.

Tammy: Can vaccination give a child the very disease it's supposed to prevent?

Katie: It is impossible to get the disease from any vaccine made with dead or weakened germs. Vaccines are the most effective weapons we have against disease. They work in 85-99% of the cases. They greatly lower your child's risk of serious illness, particularly as more people use them and prevent the spread of the diseases.

Tammy: Why do children who are healthy, active and eating well need to be vaccinated?

Katie: Vaccines are needed to help keep healthy kids healthy because vaccines work by protecting the body before disease strikes. If you wait until your child gets sick, it will be too late for the vaccine to work. Therefore, the best time to vaccinate children is when they are healthy.

Carol: Can they ever cause any serious complications?

Katie: In rare cases, vaccination can trigger serious problems, especially if a child has a history of allergies to food or medication. If they have any allergies that you know of, you need to let your doctor know before the injection.

Carol: How long do they stay immune to the disease after getting vaccinated?

Katie: Well, a few vaccines may make you immune for your entire life. Others need to be given several times – and maybe over a few years to build up immunity against the disease.

Ask your doctor for the proper immunization schedule. This may be different in each country. It is also important to keep a record of vaccinations so the doctor knows when your child is due for his next one.

As a parent, it's normal to be concerned about the medications and vaccines that your child will be getting. Understanding why immunization is important will help ease your mind. Remember, vaccines work by preparing a child's body to fight illness. In doing so, they still play a very important role in keeping kids healthy.

Carol: Thank you, Katie, for that all that great information that is so important for us to hear.

You're listening to *Women of Hope*. Thanks for coming to talk with us, Judy.

Judy: I'm so glad we have this time to share together. It's important to protect our children. I'm just grateful that such vaccines were created to keep us protected against terrible diseases.

I remember as a child having injections. My mother insisted that I be vaccinated even though I didn't like the feel of a needle. I know now that she wanted what was best for me. I would say "Ouch!" and sometimes cry when I was given the injection. I still say "Ouch!" to this very day whenever I have to have an injection.

When my own son had to have his injections it was difficult for me to see him hurt, even for a short time. It was hard for him to understand how something that hurt so much was good for him. But I knew these vaccinations were for his good and for his protection.

That is true for us as well isn't it? It's hard to explain to someone who is experiencing pain that what they are going through can be good for them. Recently, I had to have surgery to remove a mass of tissue from my pelvic area. The surgery was painful, but the mass of diseased tissue was removed from my body. Now my body can heal and I can be healthier. This painful procedure brought good results.

As a parent, we often have to make decisions that cause our child to be unhappy and to cry. You would take a toy away from your child, if it could harm him or another child wouldn't you? Your child might cry because he lost his toy, but you still have to do what is best for your child and other children. That's what a wise and loving parent does. Our role is to lovingly protect our children even though a loving act can sometimes cause pain.

Did you know that the God of the Bible is described as a loving parent who protects his children? One of my friends took his young son Caleb on a walk. It was the time of the day where the remaining sunlight left a shadow. So his son began to walk close behind his father and hold on to his legs so he could stay within his father's shadow. My friend said to his son, "Why are you holding onto my legs?"

Caleb replied, "So I can stay in your shadow. It feels safe there." Caleb had remembered a Bible verse that he had learned, and he added, "It's like God's shadow. He hides us in the 'shadow of his wings.'"

Thousands of years ago one of the Bible writers, David, wrote these words while he hid in a cave from King Saul who was jealous and trying to kill him, "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy! I look to you for protection. I will hide beneath the shadow of your wings until the danger passes by" (Psalm 57:1 NLT). God protected David and later made him king. Even as a man David took refuge under the shadow of God's wings, because he knew it was the safest place to be. He experienced painful, frightening circumstances, but as he trusted the God of the Bible, David felt safe.

Little Caleb understood that to be hidden in his father's shadow was a place of protection. When we go through pain and other trials in our life we can know that we are safe and secure with our father, God. Caleb demonstrated simple faith by hiding in his father's shadow. King David found a safe place as he trusted in God... and God protected him.

Friend, what about you? Do you know what it means to trust in God? If we are to trust God, we must tell him we need him at all times... good times as well as the painful times. God makes the good times and the bad times for a purpose. He wants to be our loving, heavenly Father, who provides what we need... and gives us protection.

To believe in God and to trust him is to have faith—faith in his promises and in what he tells us in his Word, the Bible. God tells us in the Bible about his Son, Jesus Christ, who lived here on earth and died when he was hung on a cross. After he died, God brought him to life again to show his power... even over death. This was done for us. Jesus died in our place... he took the punishment for us because we refused to believe in the God of the Bible.

For a long time I didn't believe either. One day God helped me see the truth of who he is and how much I needed him. He changed me so that I now have faith in him and his Son, Jesus. He has given me peace and joy in my life. I want you to have that faith, too and to know God's peace and joy in your life too.

Listen to these powerful words from the Bible written by Peter, one of Jesus' followers, (1 Peter 1 NLT) (v3) "All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead...

(v5) And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power...

(v6&7) So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to suffer many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine... So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ returns to this world...

(v 21) Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory.

My dear friend, trust God because he is trustworthy! Believe God's Word, the Bible because in it is truth and his precious promises. If you have faith in God, make these words King David spoke in the Bible, your prayer, "The Lord is my strength and shield. I trust him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy. I burst out in songs of thanksgiving" (Psalm 28:7 NLT). My friend, may God bless you!

Carol: Yes – God is faithful. You can trust him to take care of you. Would you like to pray with me and ask God to help you to trust him?

Dear father, God,

Thank you for your word, the Bible that tells us about you – that you love us and care for us. You know the hard things I am going through, so please help me to hide in your shadow, and stay close to you to protect me as little Caleb did with his father.

Thank you for Jesus Christ, who died for me so that I may come close to you.

We pray now in the name of Jesus, Amen

Tammy: We look forward to our time together again soon. Take care and goodbye.

Carol: Bye bye.