

# Immunizations are the best kind of preventative medicine

By Dr. Maria A. Martinez, Medical Director, Stewart Medical Center

When it comes to immunizing our children against disease, remember the old adage that an

ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

As any health care professional knows, preventing disease is more important — and often easier — than treating

it. And the best way to prevent infectious childhood diseases is to make sure your child has been immunized against them.

More than 40 years after immunization became a back-

to-school ritual in America, this cornerstone of pediatric care remains the most effective and economical method we have to prevent and control diseases like measles, mumps, polio, tetanus, diphtheria, rubella, hepatitis B, yellow fever, influenza and pneumococcal pneumonia.

For proof, look no further than the history of smallpox, a once-common disease that has been eradicated around the world thanks to worldwide immunizations.

Unfortunately, American immunization rates began to decline in the 1970s and 1980s, in part because our public health system seemed to devote less attention to monitoring vaccination coverage. That changed in 1988, when a measles epidemic brought renewed interest in immunization issues and helped convince more parents to vaccinate their children.

Today, national studies show that about 95 percent of all school-aged children in this country have been immunized against these once-common diseases.

However, the news isn't as good for 2-year-old children, all of whom should be completely vaccinated by that age. For example, studies show that only about half of all 2-year-olds living in inner cities have been completely vaccinated.

National research also indicates that immunization rates

## HEALTH

are lowest among children born to minority parents, younger parents, parents with multiple children and parents with less than average education and less than average household income. Thousands of families in the Las Vegas area fit that description.

Such statistics are alarming and have prompted public health officials to set a goal of vaccinating at least 90 percent of this population by the year 2000. This goal will likely receive more attention this December, when events related to the Annual Immunization Partners Conference are held across the nation.

Stewart Medical Center, a new health care facility at Stewart and Eastern Avenues in Las Vegas, is committed to doing its

part to reach that goal here in Las Vegas. Our policy is simple: We offer free immunizations to all local children.

We especially encourage parents with children 2 years old and younger to visit our office at 2404 E. Stewart Ave., Suite 102, even if they're not sure of their child's immunization status. Just bring your child into our office during our regular business hours Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., or from 8:00 a.m. until noon on Saturday. We'll take care of the rest. And then you can rest a little easier.

Dr. Maria A. Martinez, M.D., is the Medical Director of Stewart Medical Center, a new health care facility at Stewart and Eastern Avenues.

### HEALTH

## Tips for Treating The Common Cold

News USA

(NU) - It's that season again, the time of year when we fight like crazy to keep from getting "the bug that's going around." We try every known defense, hoping to keep the common cold from disrupting our lives at home and at work.

Most adults get two to four colds a year, with all the symptoms that make even the hardest of us miserable — runny nose, clogged sinuses, uncontrollable coughing, sore throat, achiness and that run-down feeling. Most colds last an average of seven to 10 days.

Because colds are caused by viruses they can't be cured, and doctors can't vaccinate against them. About all we can do is treat our symptoms.

There are dozens of ways to do that, from old-fashioned home remedies to modern medicine.

Doctors say treating your symptoms will help ease the discomfort, shorten the cold's life and reduce the spread of the virus among family, friends and coworkers.

#### Chicken Soup and ...

When the bug attacks, doctors suggest drinking plenty of fluids to loosen sticky mucus in the upper respiratory passages. Hot fluids such as tea and coffee are best for easing stuffiness. And yes, Mom was right about chicken soup.

Many over-the-counter preparations treat cold symptoms and bring fast relief. Decongestants open the nasal passages when you have a stuffy nose and clogged sinuses. Antihistamines suppress sneezing and dry up nasal secretions.

To relieve the stuffed-up feeling and sniffles, a non-prescription decongestant and antihistamine such as Contac will help.

Time release medicines such as Contac are especially effective for treating cold symptoms because they provide a uniform level of medication by evenly releasing their active ingredients for 12 hours.

#### Doctor's Orders

Doctors recommend using

nose drops for no more than three days at a time. If you have a cough that produces little or no mucus, a cough suppressant will help silence it. If your cough produces a lot of mucus, an expectorant will help loosen secretions so you can cough them up.

For fever, pain and that "blue" feeling associated with colds, take aspirin or acetaminophen. And to relieve a sore throat, drink lots of liquids, gargle and try an over-the-counter cough and sore throat preparation.

Before you take any medicine, however, read the labels and side-effects warnings. And don't self-medicate for more than a few days. If your symptoms persist, see your doctor.

For a free booklet on cold prevention and treatment, write to: "How to Beat the Common Cold," 445 Park Ave., Dept. NU, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10022.

Contac is a registered trademark of SmithKline Beecham Consumer Brands.

## HEALTH BRIEFS

#### BREAKFAST SHOULD BE NO. 1

Houston—If your children skip breakfast, it may be hard for them to "catch up" on their nutritional needs during the day, say nutritionists at the USDA's Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

Although breakfast supplies up to one-third of the day's energy and nutrient needs, it doesn't have to be complicated.

Children can start off on a healthy note with a glass of low-fat milk and whole grain toast and peanut butter, a low-fat breakfast bar, fresh fruit and a bagel, a low-fat muffin, or a yogurt and fruit breakfast shake.

CNRC nutritionists remind parents that breakfast gives children an energy boost, improving behavior, attitude and physical and mental performance.

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AVOIDING FOOD POISONING DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Houston—Hectic holiday meal preparation can increase the chances of food poisoning. To safeguard holiday feasts, Dr. Corinne Montandon of the USDA's Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston suggests:

\* Buy quality foods and check expiration dates.

\* Not thawing a frozen turkey at room temperature. Bacteria can multiply to disease-causing levels before it is completely thawed.

\* To avoid transferring bacteria, wash hands, utensils

and work surfaces with hot soapy water.

\* Refrigerate foods containing dairy products or eggs.

\* Not leaving perishable food out for more than two hours.

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#### CELEBRATING KWANZAA THE HEART-HEALTHY WAY

Houston—Celebrating the African-American holiday Kwanzaa is one way Blacks can cut down on the fat. Because high blood pressure is a major health problem among African-Americans, striking black men the hardest, it is a good idea to

avoid holiday meals that include fried foods, fatty meats and dairy products such as butter, said Dr. Addison Taylor of Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

Eating a Kwanzaa meal of low-fat, high-fiber foods such as brown rice, fruit, vegetables and fish prepared without salt is a good way to avoid high blood pressure and other problems in the long run.

If Kwanzaa is not for you, Taylor suggests preparing traditional holiday fare that is "heart-friendly", such as foods seasoned with margarine, lemon and herbs.

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