

Ouch!

A Lesson on Immunizations

Playgroup #8

Materials Needed

- Paper and pens
- *The Berenstain Bears Go To the Doctor*, or
- *Lions aren't Scared of Shots*
- Stuffed animals
- Band-Aids

Handouts

- After the Shots
- Childhood Immunization Schedule (birth to 6 years old)

Introduction

Give each mom a blank sheet of paper and tell them that they are going to have a “pop quiz.” Ask them to answer the following questions:

1. When should your child have their first immunization?
2. What should you do if you can't afford the immunization?
3. What is one common reason parents delay having their child immunized?
4. What is the most common childhood disease in Utah County that could be easily prevented with immunizations?

Answers: 1. At birth before leaving the hospital (Hepatitis B), 2. Contact the Utah County Health Department, they have most childhood vaccines for \$5 through a special program, 3. Because it is stressful to deal with the child's crying or anxiety, 4. Pertussis (whooping cough) is the most common with 162 cases in Utah County in 2006.

Go over the answers with the mothers in your playgroup. Explain to them that timely administration of childhood immunizations is important to protect their child from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Lesson Plan

Lesson Objectives

- Understand how to reduce your child's fear of immunizations
- Know how to prepare yourself and child for immunization day
- Understand options for the uninsured

Reducing your Child's Fear of Immunizations

An immunization shot does not need to be stressful for children. Many parents provide their children with the information and support needed in order to make the immunizations as easy as possible. However, for some parents and children, needles become scary and immunizations can

quickly become a stressful event. Keep in mind that children can easily tell if their parents are afraid of needles and injections. When parents are anxious, children are likely to become anxious. If the parent acts extremely worried about the child's behavior during the immunization, then the child is also more likely to become upset. To decrease anxiety about immunizations, parents can do the following:

Start Early

With preparation and support, children won't be as anxious or afraid of the place where they receive immunizations. To help relieve your child's anxiety, you can do the following:

- Remain calm and confident. If needed, try anxiety-relieving techniques such as breathing and muscle relaxation.
- Bring along a stuffed toy or blanket for your child to hold on to during the immunization.
- Plan on holding your child during the procedure. Prepare yourself to talk calmly during the procedure.
- Plan to assess your child's coping after the shot. If they are still upset after the shot, don't immediately leave the office as the child will learn that this is a bad place that can be escaped by crying. It is important to let the child calm down before leaving.
- Reinforce ahead of time that the health care provider's office is a nice place and that the doctors and nurses are there to help.

To Reduce the Child's Anxiety

The majority of immunizations are given to children under 15 months old. This can sometimes be a difficult age since they do not have the ability to anticipate what will take place in certain situations like older children. To help reduce your child's anxiety, consider the following: Tell your child why immunizations or "shots" are necessary. Explain that shots keep us from getting sick.

Be honest about what the child may feel when getting an immunization. Never tell them that it won't hurt at all. Instead, explain that the slight pain only lasts for a short while.

Explain that you (or another person they trust) will be with them during the immunization.

Preparing for Immunization Day

When the immunization appointment draws near, reevaluate how you and your child reacted to the last immunization. Were you calm? Were you anxious? Was it a stressful event? You are the best judge of how much preparation your child needs to deal with immunization day. For children under the age of 7, tell them about the immunization appointment about one hour

beforehand. A longer “countdown” may cause extra anxiety. You can choose any of the activities from the following list to help the appointment go smoother:

- Use distraction while in the waiting room. This can include singing, humor, music, TV, reading, blowing bubbles, or talking about any subject not related to immunizations.
- Tell your child to “blow away the pain” by blowing out really hard just before the injection. Children can even be given a party blower to add to the distraction.
- Get down to the child’s eye level and be honest in telling them that the shot will hurt a little, but the pain won’t last long. If the child desires, you can sit next to them or hold them gently during the procedure.
- Using whichever arm is not being injected, have the child squeeze your hand as hard as what the pain is.
- Remain calm and in control while in the examination room. Don’t give children the control to postpone or avoid the inevitable by saying that they need to go to the bathroom – have them go beforehand.
- Let the child watch the needle piercing the skin if they want to. However, you can also act as the focal point if the child decides to look away. You can also become the “eyes” to report on the progress of the procedure and when it will be over.
- Set reasonable and firm limits. Children of any age should be allowed to cry and not feel embarrassed; however, they should also be aware that kicking and screaming are not acceptable.
- Reward your child afterward! Praise them and go somewhere special afterward to celebrate such as getting an ice cream cone.

Options for the Uninsured

Vaccine for Children Program – Offers childhood immunizations at little cost for children enrolled in Medicaid, CHIP, or who have no health insurance or are underinsured. To find out if you are eligible, call the Utah Immunization Program at 801-538-9450.

Activity

For this activity you will need one of the books listed in the suggested reading section as well as a few stuffed animals, a ballpoint pen, and Band-Aids.

Read *The Berenstain Bears Go to the Doctor* or *Lions Aren’t Scared of Shots* with the children. Afterwards, use the stuffed animals or puppets to role play a visit to the doctor’s office. The child can play the role of the doctor or nurse and pretend to give the stuffed animal or puppet a

shot. A straw or ballpoint pen can be used as the pretend needle. Prompt the child to tell the stuffed animal or puppet that the shot will hurt, but only for a moment. After giving the pretend shot, the child can then apply a Band-Aid to the pretend injection site.

Suggested Reading

The Berenstain Bears Go to the Doctor

By Stan and Jan Berenstain.

Lions Aren't Scared of Shots: A Story for Children about Visiting the Doctor

By Howard J. Bennett.

References

Training Children to Cope and Parents to Coach them During Routine Immunizations: Effects on Child, Parent, and Staff Behaviors. (1992). *Behavior Therapy*, Vol. 23, pp. 689-705.

Preparation of Children for Painful Procedures. (1990). *Pediatric Nursing*, 16 (6), pp. 537-541.

The Needle is Like an Animal: How Children View Injections. (1978). *Child Today*, Jan/Feb, pp. 18-21.

Coping Skills for Children Undergoing Painful Medical Procedures. (1988). *Issues in Comprehensive pediatric Nursing*, Vol. 11, pp. 113-143.

Thought Stopping: A Strategy for Impending Feared Events. (1984). *Issues in Comprehensive Pediatric Nursing*, Vol. 7, pp. 83-89.

7 Ways to Soothe Kids Getting Vaccines. (2007). WebMD. Retrieved December 19, 2007 from <http://children.webmd.com/news/20070509/7-ways-to-soothe-kids-getting-vaccines>.

Additional immunization information can be found by visiting www.immun-wize.org