Babies’ Immune Systems: What Can They Handle?

When babies are born, they leave the sterile environment of the womb and enter a world filled with germs. Bacteria very quickly start to live on the lining of their noses, mouths and intestines, as well as on their skin. They also come into contact with viruses. In most cases, their immune systems are ready and able to protect them against the most harmful infections.

Soon after birth, babies are also recommended to get vaccines. Some people wonder if the vaccines are too great of an assault on their immune systems, but the reality is that babies’ immune systems encounter more challenges from the environment than from vaccines. Indeed, a scraped knee or the common cold is a greater challenge to the immune system than vaccines.

In this new Science Made Easy video (vaccine.chop.edu/videos) Dr. Offit describes what babies’ immune systems can handle in the first few months of life, which parts of the immune system need time to mature, and how vaccines given during that time period are designed to help babies overcome some of these challenges.

Don’t forget to check out the other Science Made Easy videos:

- Can a Blood Test Replace a Vaccine Dose?
- The Stages of Viral Infection: How HPV and Shingles Play a Long Game
- How are Strains of Influenza Chosen for the Annual Vaccine?
- Are Maternal Antibodies Considered When the Vaccine Schedule Is Made?

You can access Science Made Easy and other VEC videos at vaccine.chop.edu/videos.
Trivia Answer:
The correct answer is C. A baby can handle at least 10,000 immunological challenges on a given day, which is much less than the total number of immunological challenges provided by the 150 immunological components present in today’s 14 childhood vaccines.

Go to vaccine.chop.edu/trivia to play Just the Vax, the Vaccine Education Center’s trivia game, where you can find this question and others like it.

News & Notes

Find an influenza vaccine near you

Do you, or other family members, still need to get the flu vaccine? If you are not sure where you can get it, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) has an easy-to-use vaccine locator. In addition to a flu vaccine-specific locator, the page also offers a general vaccine locator and a health clinic locator.

Check it out today: https://www.vaccines.gov/getting/where

Parents Are TALKING helps parents talk about sex with their teens

The Department of Adolescent Medicine at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) offers a website to help parents talk to their children about sex. The website includes games with practice conversation opportunities, communication tips, and information about topics relevant to teens as they mature, such as contraception, condom use, abstinence and more.

Check out parentsaretalking.com today.

Subscribe to our newsletter

If you’re interested in receiving our free email newsletter, visit our website: www.vaccine.chop.edu/parents to sign up. If you have a question about vaccines, visit the Vaccine Education Center website: www.vaccine.chop.edu.

Send us your comments

If you have any comments about this newsletter or suggestions about how we can make our program more helpful, please send them to contactPACK@email.chop.edu.