



HEALTH NOTES



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Adventist Medical
Evangelism Network

AMEN's mission is to motivate, train, and equip Seventh-day Adventist health-care professionals to team with pastors and members, uniting the church to restore Christ's ministry of healing to the world, hastening His return.

To learn more about AMEN and get involved go to: amensda.org.

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Diseases that Don't Kill Anymore

Vaccines are controversial for some people. There was the unfounded claim that childhood vaccinations caused autism resulting in many parents keeping their children from receiving beneficial childhood immunizations. The recent outbreaks of measles in New York and other cities has occurred in populations of unimmunized children.

SMALLPOX used to be a devastating disease that killed 30% of those who caught it. Those who recovered had pock marks over the entire body that lasted the rest of their lives. In 1796 a physician, Edward Jenner, observed that people who had contracted the much milder disease cowpox were immune to smallpox. He deliberately infected healthy people with cowpox and thus protected them from the deadly smallpox.

Later it was discovered that administering dead viruses by injection provoked the same protective immune response in the body that an actual infection did. Persons developed immunity to deadly diseases without ever having to be sick. Thanks to the global administration of the smallpox vaccine, this deadly disease has been eliminated from the world. As a result we no longer immunize persons for smallpox because the disease has been extinct since 1972.

A similar disease eradication has occurred with polio. **Polio** was often contracted in childhood. Persons surviving the acute infection were often left with paralyzed arms or legs for the rest of their lives. Polio peaked in 1952 when it killed 3000 children in the United States and left thousands more weak or paralyzed. Thanks to the polio vaccine, outbreaks of polio were eliminated in this country by 1979. Currently, polio only exists in Nigeria, Pakistan, and Afghanistan where eradication efforts are about concluded.

DIPHTHERIA is spread by droplets from coughing and starts out as a sore throat and swollen tonsils. This is followed by a gray-colored mucus layer that blocks the throat causing death. Those who initially survive diphtheria are prone to develop permanent nerve damage and heart failure. More than 200,000 people had diphtheria in 1921 and that year there were more than 15,000 deaths from the disease—mostly in children. Thanks to an effective vaccine there have been only five cases of diphtheria in the United States in the past 10 years.

MEASLES causes a rash, high fever, and serious long-term complications. A severe infection can result in complications including blindness, brain damage and even death. In the late 1950's about 3 million people a year caught the measles. Of these nearly 50,000 required hospitalization and about 500 of these resulted in death. Thanks to an effective vaccine, measles was effectively eradicated in the United States in 2000. Recent localized outbreaks have resulted from unvaccinated people



bringing the infection back to this country from areas where vaccinations are scarce and measles is prevalent.

CERVICAL CANCER caused by the human papilloma virus is being prevented by the early vaccination of girls using a multi-valent vaccine that protects a person from several of the deadliest strains of HPV.

MUMPS rarely causes death but does carry the risk of multiple potentially serious complications including sterility and encephalitis. The mumps component of the MMR vaccine is not quite as effective as the other two components that give protection from Measles and Rubella. People who have received two doses of the MMR vaccine and still happen to catch the mumps will have a short, mild, and complication free course of the disease.

There are effective vaccines that protect a person from contracting **Hepatitis A and B**. **Chronic Hepatitis B** gradually destroys the liver and is a cause of fatal liver cancer.

There are vaccines that protect a person from 20 strains of bacteria that cause **pneumonia** in adults and vaccines that offer protection from the **shingles virus**.

BACTERIA MENINGITIS if often fatal. Vaccination of college aged students and military conscripts is important.

TETANUS commonly known as "lock jaw" carries a high mortality rate and is completely controlled with a simple immunization.

Complications from vaccination are extremely rare (1 or 2 serious complications per 1 million vaccinations) and are well worth the risk given the devastating diseases they protect us from.

ELLEN WHITE VS. CHARLES DARWIN: Charles Darwin opposed vaccinations because of his belief in "survival of the fittest." Ellen White set a better example. When there was an epidemic of smallpox in the vicinity, she received a vaccination and urged her helpers and those connected with her to be vaccinated.

Vaccines are a blessing to humanity. Medical science has devised ways to activate a person's immune system against specific deadly organisms thereby eliminating the risk of ever catching a whole host of debilitating and deadly diseases.

So, get yourself and your children immunized according to the recommended schedule. Immunizations will protect you and your family.