



need for needles

A new generation of parents may not believe in vaccination, but some shots are critical for kids

BY DR. ART HISTER



parents, have never seen a case of polio or meningitis from *H. influenzae*, so many of these people have much less respect for those vaccines that we thought were priceless. Through the magic of the Internet, anti-vaccine parents are now spreading those beliefs and convincing lots of wavering parents to forego immunizing their kids.

Which brings me to the rotavirus vaccine, a vaccine against the most common cause of diarrhea

from rotavirus infections, 21 of whom died mostly from severe dehydration.

With wider use of the newer vaccine, however, the rotavirus infection rate is now practically zero for very young kids. Equally important, in older kids it's dropped significantly, too, due to the phenomenon of herd immunity — that is, when enough vulnerable people get immunized, infections in the rest of the population drop, too.

And happily, based on

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Those of us of a certain age (north of 40, south of the cemetery) remember things that younger people have only read about: TVs with rabbit ears, rotary-dial phones and most importantly, the widespread damage once caused by illnesses you never hear about today, such as diphtheria, whooping cough, measles and polio.

Which is why most rotary-dial-generation folks strongly believe that the best things that ever came along — even better than iPads, iPhones and eye exams — were vaccines against all those nasty infections.

Our generation, though, is not the one having kids any longer, except, I suppose, for a few old guys trying to prove they're still young. Our kids, the modern-day

and vomiting among young children, but one that gets a disproportionate share of “negative” play on the Internet because: 1) the first edition of this vaccine was withdrawn from the market due to complications it caused in a few kids; and 2) “it’s just diarrhea, after all.”

But as anyone who’s ever had Delhi belly on a non-stop toilet-free bus eight hours from Mumbai can attest, there’s diarrhea and there’s diarrhea. So, before the introduction of the new rotavirus vaccine, according to the Center for Disease Control, 58,000 kids a year in the U.S. were hospitalized with diarrhea and vomiting

good surveillance studies, the current vaccine seems safe and well tolerated.

Bottom line: Vaccines work, they’re safe and they should be given to most kids. If, as a new parent, you’re not sure, just ask your own dad or mom how it used to be. But be forewarned — you’ll probably also get a lecture about how hockey isn’t what it used to be and how lucky you are not to have to walk seven miles each way to an unheated one-room school.

And believe me, it wasn’t fun. Especially in the snow in Montreal. ■

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