



# Nurses' Notes

An informative health newsletter presented by the Gwinnett County School Nurses

Volume 2      Number 3      March 2008

## Health Topic – Vaccines are not only for children!

### **DPT - Diphtheria, Pertussis (Whooping Cough) , Tetanus/Tdap**

I had a DPT vaccine (diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis) as a child, and a tetanus shot a few years ago. Why do I need another shot?

The DPT that you had as a child is no longer effective. Unfortunately, most immunizations need booster shots to remain effective. The new booster is Tdap and is indicated for individuals 11-64 yrs. This offers protection against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis. There has been a resurgence of pertussis in the last several years due to lack of re-vaccination of adults. This vaccine is recommended for individuals that work in health care, schools or have contact with children less than 12 months of age.

### **Pneumonia/Pneumovax (pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine)**

This vaccine is used to prevent Streptococcal infections such as pneumonia and septicemia. This vaccine is recommended for adults over the age of 65, and for adults and children in special risk categories such as people with: serious breathing problems, serious heart conditions, severe kidney problems, long term liver disease, diabetes, and immunosuppression.

The vaccine should be administered only once, as subsequent re-injection may cause severe local reaction.

### **Meningitis/Menactra**

Teens and College students are at greatest risk for Meningococcal Meningitis, a potentially fatal illness. Even with treatment it can kill a healthy young person in less than 48 hours. Those who survive may still suffer hearing loss, brain damage, loss of limbs and severe scarring. Many people are carriers of this disease which is spread through saliva and other respiratory droplets. How do many high school and college kids live/ behave? They gather in groups, live in groups, share food, stay out late, eat poorly, kiss...many behaviors that might expose them to the bacteria and weaken the immune system. The Menactra vaccination is a one time vaccine recommended at the 11-12 year old check up or prior to entering high school or college.

### **Shingles/Zostavax**

Anyone who has recovered from chickenpox may develop shingles, including children. However, the risk of getting shingles most commonly occurs in people 50 years old and older.

Shingles is a painful skin rash that clears in 2 to 4 weeks. For about 1 in 5 persons, severe pain can continue even after the rash clears. This pain is called post-herpetic neuralgia and can last anywhere from 30 days to several months or even years. As people get older, they are more likely to develop this neuralgia and it is more likely to be severe.

Is there a vaccine to prevent shingles? Yes. Zostavax, a one time vaccination was approved in 2006 for people 60 and older. The vaccine is only recommended for this age group because the safety and effects were only studied in this group.



## Spotlight on... Maryann Montigel



Maryann Montigel, RN, BS is a School Nurse Consultant/Liaison for Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. She has served GCPS in this capacity for the past eleven years. Maryann is also the Scoliosis Coordinator for GCPS. Her school nursing career began in the state of New Jersey and prior to that she was a Flight Attendant for American Airlines. Maryann believes that the best part of her job is "helping children, parents and schools see the connection between health and learning". Maryann is passionate about School Nurses! "Schools get a real bargain when they have a School Nurse. Nurses have experience in counseling, psychology, and nutrition. Nurses are also nurturers. The expertise they have gives teachers the freedom to do their jobs." Maryann also believes in the importance of adult immunizations. She made sure she got her Pertussis vaccine now that she is Grandmother to Colin, age one. Maryann is married to Bob and has 2 sons.

March is National Nutrition Month

Eat  
Healthy



Get  
adequate  
rest

Wear your pedometer and exercise!

## Ask the Nurses... "Can I get Shingles from kids that have Chickenpox"?

Chickenpox and shingles are two diseases caused by the same virus, varicella. You can only get shingles if you had chicken pox. The virus stays in your body in certain nerve cells. As you get older, or your immune system gets weak, the chickenpox virus may escape from the nerve cells and cause shingles. No one can catch shingles from you, but they can catch chicken pox if they haven't had it already or have not received the vaccine. The chickenpox virus lives in the blisters from the shingles, and the virus can be spread until the blisters are completely healed.

\*\*\*\*\*Submit future "Ask the Nurses" questions to your County School Nurse\*\*\*\*\*