

Doctor: Are We Over-Vaccinating Small Children?

I'm not someone who writes about vaccinations. In fact, if I'm at a social event and two people begin to discuss argue about vaccinations, I quickly recall that I forgot something somewhere and excuse myself.

That said, one of my physician-friends recently shared an article from the Scientific Parent that touched on vaccinations.

In the piece, Dr. Alison Shuman, a California-based pediatrician, asks whether or not small children are being vaccinated "[too much, too soon](#)." Shuman, Chair of Pediatrics at Community Memorial Hospital in Ventura, says that contrary to popular belief, children are actually being exposed to far fewer foreign agents than their parents and grandparents had as children.

We have refined and improved our vaccines so much that our children today are even safer than we were. So when you worry about exposing your children to so many "more" things, don't worry, you aren't! You are exposing them to fewer antigens than all of us got. If you are wondering how many antigens are in certain vaccines, the hepatitis B, diphtheria and tetanus vaccines each contain just one antigen.

Essentially, children are receiving more vaccinations but far fewer antigens in those vaccinations. Here's what she says:

When we were children (70s, 80s and early 90s) we were vaccinated against fewer things (which were nonetheless still deadly). Let's take the [CDC's vaccine schedule from 1983 for example](#). There were seven diseases we were protected against including measles, mumps, rubella, (MMR), Diphtheria, tetanus

and pertussis (DTaP) and polio. Because of how vaccines were made at the time, we were exposed to [about 3,000 antigens by the time we were 12 months old and 12,000 by the time we were 4](#) if we got all of our vaccines.

Antigens are basically any foreign material designed to trigger or stimulate your immune system. In vaccinations, these “foreign invaders” are weakened so human immune systems can easily overcome them and learn how to defend itself from whatever virus or bacteria one is being immunized for.

According to Shuman and the below chart provided by Scientific Parent, advances in the field of medicine have allowed medical professionals to combat twice as many diseases with just a fraction of the antigens.

Will this end the debates on vaccinations? Of course not. Nor should it. Putting foreign agents into our children is serious stuff, and open, inquiring minds can help us better understand what we’re putting into their bodies and why we’re doing it.

I know many people out there are passionate about this issue and know much more about it than I do. So I ask: Did Shuman miss anything or get something wrong? Did she change your mind?

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