

## NEXT CLUNCH ARTICLE – WHY VACCINATION MATTERS

Vaccination has been an increasingly important part of the care that Burwell surgery provides. This includes childhood vaccinations but also Flu vaccinations and more recently Covid jabs. Burwell Surgery has very high vaccination rates generally:

	Vaccination rate, last 12 months
Completed 3 doses of Diptheria Tetanus and pertussis by 8 months	97.6%
First MMR given at 12 months	93.5%
Second MMR given preschool	94.3%
Eligible >80 year olds and shingles	94.9%

Despite this there is still work to be done. For example, the Surgery have identified 61 patients under the age of 15 who have an incomplete course of MMR and 120 from the ages of 16 to 29 years.

There are a number of reasons why some members of the community might have concerns about vaccine safety, so members of the PPG have asked the Surgery to respond to a range of questions on the subject.

### **Aren't vaccine-preventable diseases just part of life? Is it not better to have the disease than become immune through vaccines?**

Because of the effectiveness of vaccinations, we have perhaps forgotten how much trouble can be caused by the diseases that we vaccinate against. At the time of writing there is particular concern regarding the current measles outbreak with more than 200 cases in London, the West Midlands and the Humber. Measles typically causes an unpleasant illness from which most children fully recover. However one in 15 children can develop more serious complications from measles (e.g. ear and chest infections, fits, diarrhoea and brain infections). These symptoms and complications are all almost entirely preventable with 2 doses of vaccination.

### **Why should I vaccinate my child? Aren't most of the other children around them already immune?**

There is a benefit to the individual child by being protected by vaccination, but also to others by preventing spread (so called 'herd immunity'). With measles it is quite hard to achieve herd immunity because the virus is very contagious. It is therefore recommended that vaccination rates should be at 90 to 95% to achieve this.

### **Will a vaccine give me or my child the disease it's designed to prevent?**

10% of children will get a high temperature 6-12 days after a MMR vaccination. In children with a normal immune system you will not get measles from a vaccination. A tiny percentage of children with severe immune deficiency can get a measles like illness. These children should not be vaccinated with MMR.

### **Are there microchips in vaccines?**

No

### **Will vaccines alter my or my child's DNA?**

No

### **Do childhood vaccines cause autism and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)?**

No they don't. There was a scare about autism in the late 1990's. However there is no credible evidence to support the link between MMR and autism. MMR vaccination has been used around the world effectively for 30 years. Over 500 million doses have been given in over 100 countries. Numerous studies have failed to find a link between MMR and autism.

There is no evidence that any vaccination causes Sudden Infant Death syndrome. In the case of MMR the first dose is given about 12 months which is older than most SIDS cases.

### **I'm in an older or vulnerable age group and I've already had flu or COVID-19 and recovered. Why should I continue to have these vaccinations when they're offered to me?**

Unfortunately there are many different influenza viruses and having had an infection will not give you much protection against many of the other virus strains. A flu vaccination will give you protection against the 3-4 viral strains that have been predicted to be circulating over a particular winter. Vaccination is generally thought to lower the likelihood of getting flu by about 40-60% and make the symptoms less severe if you get flu.

As regards Covid vaccination, the protection that you get both from an infection or from a vaccination wanes over time. The protection is highest for the 12 weeks following vaccination and drops significantly by 6 months. It is therefore a good idea to have any booster that you are offered. It may not prevent Covid infection but is likely to significantly reduce the severity of any subsequent infection.

You will be able to find an immunisation schedule online if you wish to review this. If you are concerned that your child has missed any immunisations the Surgery can be contacted, ideally on AskmyGP, and they would be very happy to arrange these for you.

The next meeting of the Burwell Surgery Patient Participation Group is at 6.30pm on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024. If you would be interested in finding out more about the group and helping to support Burwell Surgery to give their patients the best service that they can then please contact [admin.burwellsurgery@nhs.net](mailto:admin.burwellsurgery@nhs.net).