



Your Health
Counts

Take a Shot!

It's Immunization Time!

BY BROOKS CLARK AND JENNIFER BECKETT

As parents of three children under 10, Julie Griffin-Chamberlain, an assistant in Labor Relations, and Scot Chamberlain, an electrician with Power System Operations, are well acquainted with their pediatrician's recommended schedule of exams and immunizations.

"Loren Ann, who just turned 4, will undergo a battery of immunizations in her next wellness exam," says Julie. "Last year she got a flu mist during her annual checkup."

Two years ago Brennan, 7, had the shots required for kindergarten. "He actually got them the week after school started," says Julie. "So many families call for appointments right before school that Knoxville Pediatric Associates couldn't get us in right away."

Last year Emory, 9, received the flu shot at a Walgreen's Minute Clinic. "It's important for him because he has asthma," says Julie.

Why are childhood vaccines so important?

Although newborns are naturally immune to many diseases at birth, the immunity may last only a month to about a year. Young children do not have immunity against some vaccine-preventable diseases, such as whooping cough.

Non-vaccinated children may not be strong enough to fight diseases if exposed to a disease germ. Before vaccines, many children died from diseases that vaccines now prevent. Although

those germs still exist today, we don't see them as often since babies and young children are now protected by vaccines.

The immunization of children also helps to protect the health of our communities and schools. People with chronic illnesses will be less likely to be exposed to disease germs that can be passed around by unvaccinated children. Immunization also helps to slow down or even stop disease outbreaks.

Reminder: For eligible dependents under the age of 6, all TVA medical plans have a well-child benefit. Exams and immunizations are covered at 100 percent based on the frequency shown below:

Birth up to age 1:	5 exams, in addition to the initial physical exam in the hospital
Age 1 up to 2:	3 exams
Age 2 up to 3:	2 exams
Age 3 up to 6:	1 exam per year

Meningitis

Meningitis is an inflammation of the membranes that cover the brain and spinal cord. It is usually caused by a viral or bacterial infection. Viral meningitis is generally less severe and clears up without specific treatment. Bacterial meningitis can be quite severe and may result in brain damage, hearing loss or learning disabilities. The vaccine for one type of bacterial meningitis, *Haemophilus influenzae* type b, or Hib, is given to children as part of their routine immunizations. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention recommend that 11-12 year olds receive another shot, the *Meningococcal conjugate* vaccine, or MCV4. They also recommend a booster dose at 16 years. After outbreaks on several campuses a few years ago, many colleges require entering freshmen to get the MCV4 immunization.