Children's Health

Every Baby Deserves The Best "Shot" At Good Health; Hib Vaccine Protects Against Dreaded Disease

(NAPSA)—As a parent, you want to give your child the best shot at a long, healthy life. A key to ensuring your child's well-being is on-time vaccination against devastating but avoidable diseases.

One such disease is *Haemophilus influenzae* type b, commonly referred to as Hib. Hib disease usually occurs in infants and preschool children and is caused by bacteria. Hib can develop into a serious, often life-threatening illness. Most children will survive a Hib infection, but they may experience a number of potentially life-long complications. A disease called bacterial meningitis, which causes swelling of the protective covering of the brain and spinal cord, is the most common Hib infection. Survivors of Hib meningitis may suffer mental retardation, deafness, learning disabilities, motor abnormalities or seizures.

Prevention Is Key

The good news is that prevention is available. "Hib vaccination in this country has been so successful that many parents and pediatricians have never even seen the disease, much less the permanent damage it can cause," said David Greenberg, M.D., Director, Scientific & Medical Affairs, sanofi pasteur. "As long as parents and health care providers continue to vaccinate infants and children on time, we can prevent the return of this disease. Even one case is too many."

Amazingly, just two short decades ago, about 20,000 people—most under the age of 5—suffered from Hib infections each year. But today, thanks to the introduction of ActHIB (Haemophilus b Conjugate Vaccine [Tetanus Toxoid Conjugate]) and other vaccines that protect against the disease, fewer than 100 cases are reported annually.

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While the number of Hib cases is currently low, health experts caution parents that they shouldn't let their guard down and remind them that the best protection is through on-time immunization. Your child can get Hib by being around children and adults who may be carriers of the bacteria and not know it. Day care attendance, having school-aged siblings and living in a large household each increase the risk for disease.

On-Time Vaccination Is The Goal

Since the late 1980s, immunization during infancy has been the most effective way to prevent Hib. Protection starts with a series of vaccinations between 2 and 6 months of age, followed by a booster dose between 12 and 18 months of age. The injections should be received at these specific ages, so no matter how busy you are, be sure to bring your child in for all scheduled vaccination visits.

Today, Hib is rare, but it is still a threat. That is why it is important that babies receive recommended immunizations on time. Talk to your health care provider or local health department about Hib vaccination, or go to www.Hibdisease.com or www.Hib.com for more information about Hib and other vaccine-preventable diseases.

Safety Information

There are risks associated with all vaccines. Local and systemic adverse reactions to ActHIB vaccine may include injection-site redness, swelling and tenderness, as well as fever, irritability and drowsiness. Other local and systemic adverse reactions may occur. ActHIB vaccine is contraindicated in children known to have experienced a severe allergic reaction to any vaccine component or following a prior dose of the vaccine, as well as in children who are less than 6 weeks of age because of the potential for development of immunologic tolerance. Because intramuscular injections can cause injection-site bruising, if it is determined that the potential benefits clearly outweigh the risk, intramuscular injections should be given with caution to persons with any bleeding disorder. Vaccination should be delayed in children with moderate or severe acute illnesses; however, minor illnesses (such as mild upper respiratory infection) are not contraindications to vaccination.