

New Online Resource Reminds Parents To Vaccinate Against Hib Disease, A Lethal Childhood Illness

(NAPSA)—With all the new-found responsibilities that come with child-raising, an infant's first couple of months can be overwhelming for parents as they struggle to make the right choices to protect their child. While most parents know why infants need to travel in a car seat or to stay clear of household poisons, they may not understand the need to vaccinate against a disease they may never have heard of.

One such vaccination that most new parents are unfamiliar with is Haemophilus influenzae type b, or Hib disease. Although the introduction of Hib conjugate vaccines has contributed to a decline in the disease, many parents are surprised to learn that Hib disease still occurs in the U.S., as the Hib organism continues to circulate in the general population.

In order to remind parents that Hib still exists and why they need to stay on guard against this deadly disease, the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) has launched a comprehensive online resource for parents and healthcare providers focused on Hib disease—"Hib disease.com."

"Due to the success of Hib conjugate vaccines, we have seen a decline in the number of Hib cases in the U.S. As a result, many people don't know that the Hib organism still circulates in the general population and have forgotten how devastating this disease can be," said Mary Beth Koslap-Petraco, a pediatric nurse practitioner who chairs NAPNAP's special interest group on immunization. "In the U.S. there are too many cases of Hib disease every year, which can jeopardize a child's ability to talk,

walk or perform daily activities by himself or herself. Hibdisease.com is a powerful tool, reminding us why both healthcare providers and parents must remain diligent in maintaining high immunization rates."

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Carriage, or the colonization of the Hib organism in the mouth and throat in the general population, plays an important role in disease transmission. This continued presence of the organism in infected populations, or even in the general U.S. population, helps support the need to continue to immunize against this disease. The disease presents a most serious threat to susceptible infants and could easily make a comeback should Hib vaccination rates drop in this country.

"It's an unfortunate occurrence that we still see cases of Hib disease in the U.S. when there is a highly effective vaccine to safeguard children from this severe illness," said Dana DeShon, a pediatric nurse practitioner who serves on the editorial board for Hibdisease.com and is a member of the NAPNAP Immunization Special Interest Group. "Hib disease.com can serve as an easy-to-use educational resource for healthcare providers and parents to research current issues on Hib disease. Hopefully, the Web site will generate awareness of the resurgent risk that Hib disease

poses if we fail to maintain high immunization rates."

Hib Disease

Before the introduction of Hib conjugate vaccines, one in every 200 children in the U.S. younger than five years of age was affected by the disease. Hib infection can result in swelling of the brain; pneumonia; infectious arthritis; severe swelling in the throat, making it hard to breath; middle ear infection; skin inflammation; bone infection; and a dangerous heart disease known as pericarditis. Hib is also fatal in some cases. In fact, before the introduction of a vaccine, Hib was responsible for almost as many cases and deaths as polio during its peak in the mid-1950s.

However, Hib is preventable and immunization remains the best protective measure for safeguarding your child. Experience has shown that all Hib conjugate vaccines are safe and effective in preventing against invasive Hib disease in clinical trials. Routine immunization has consistently led to decreases in invasive Hib disease of 90 percent or more in the U.S. and other countries.

NAPNAP is sponsoring this Web site in an effort to promote recognition of this serious childhood disease. The parental section of the Web site also includes frequently asked questions and personal parental experiences with Hib disease in both English and Spanish. The site also features a Hib disease overview, a reporting guide and a resource guide for healthcare professionals.

Log onto Hibdisease.com to learn more about how to protect your child against this severe childhood disease.