

PEDIATRIC CENTER OF ROUND ROCK
2300 Round Rock Ave. # 102
Round Rock, TX 78681
(512) 733- KID
733-5437

Q.- How important is it to breast feed my baby?

A.- It is VERY important. Breast milk provides all the nutrients the baby needs, at the rate she needs them, and with all that nutritional support you also provide antibodies to prime the baby's immune system and protect against infections. We don't know what makes breast milk so easy to digest, but the fact is that babies who breastfeed don't have a lot of digestive difficulties. Lately we also learned that adolescents that were breastfed have a decreased incidence of obesity.

In some cases breastfeeding is not possible, or supplementation may be indicated; some babies are small and may need extra nutrition early, they may have jaundice or other medical conditions. Your Pediatrician is your best guide to help you overcome these obstacles. Remember, every baby is different, and every situation may require a different approach.

Q.- Are pacifiers bad for my baby?

A.- Like with all controversial issues you are going to get different answers to this question, depending on whom you ask. Babies have a need to suck, for nutritive purposes and also for non-nutritive ones, that is, for soothing purposes. Some babies have a strong need to suck to sooth themselves all the time; those babies are happy when they are given a pacifier, and they are the ones to suck their fingers, when they get enough coordination to get their fingers to the mouth. However, a pacifier should never be given to a baby to delay feeding and it should be used only when you know your baby is not hungry. Never tie a pacifier around the baby's neck or arm, as it could cause serious injury.

Q.- Why do I have to give my baby Hepatitis B vaccine so early? Isn't the disease transmitted just by blood or sexual contact?

A.- You are right; the Hepatitis B virus is mainly transmitted by blood or sexual contact, but not exclusively. Hepatitis B infection is the leading cause of liver cancer and chronic liver disease in adults, and when a vaccine for Hepatitis B was developed, the first recommendation was to give it just to those who were more obviously at risk, that is, adolescents and beyond. The

success of that intervention was very poor, and the incidence of liver cancer and chronic liver disease in adults continued to climb. Somewhere between the newborn period and adolescence patients were contracting the infection, even if they never used drugs or had sexual contacts. It wasn't until we started immunizing babies that we began to see a decrease in liver disease; and that is the short answer on why we give the vaccine to babies. Remember, viruses are smart creatures, and we don't have a lot of ways to treat them. Some of them can settle in our bodies forever, and Hepatitis B is one of them.

Q.- Are vaccines really necessary? I read some of those diseases don't exist anymore, and giving too many vaccines could damage the immune system.

A.- The reason why you don't hear much about those diseases anymore is because a good percentage of the population is immunized. Some of our older relatives may still remember the devastation of polio, and every year we still have cases of measles in our larger cities. Vaccines save lives, and this is not a controversial issue; everybody agrees on that. Giving multiple vaccines at the same time is a safe practice and it doesn't in any way damage the immune system. If the question is, are vaccines "totally" safe? The answer is "no"; nothing is completely and totally safe, and your baby can develop an unusual adverse reaction to a vaccine, but it is rare, and the risk of contracting the disease the vaccine tries to protect against, highly outweighs the risk.

Q.- How do I know when to call my pediatrician? I am afraid to have a silly question.

A.- There is not such a thing as a silly question. Parent observations are usually right when it comes to deciding if their baby is sick or not. It is not your job to know what is wrong, and if you think something is different, just follow your instincts and make an appointment with your Pediatrician. As for those routine questions, make sure to write them down to get you questions answered at the time of the well checks. Well exams are not only to give vaccines; they are an opportunity to discuss what to expect until the next visit, since babies go through rapid changes in eating, development, sleeping habits, etc.

ABOUT US.....

THE PEDIATRIC CENTER OF ROUND ROCK is a group of 4 Pediatricians located in Round Rock, next to the Round Rock Medical Center, in the black glass professional building adjacent to the hospital.

Dr. Marta Katalenas has been in Round Rock since 1996 and **Dr. Evelyn Spencer** joined in 2003. Dr. Nitzia Cepeda and Dr. Lisa Hutchens are the newest additions to the group.

We see newborns at Round Rock Medical Center and at North Austin Medical Center. Our office hours are 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM M-F and Saturday 9-12.

REFERENCES

- 1.- Armstrong,J., Reilly JJ, Child Health Information Team. Breastfeeding and lowering the risk of childhood obesity. Lancet. 2002; 359: 2003-2004.
- 2.- Daland R. JuBerg, PhD et al. An Observational Study of Object Mouthing Behavior by Young Children. Pediatrics, Vol. 107. Jan 2001. 135-142.
- 3.- American Academy of Pediatrics Medical Library. www.AAP.org. Thumb Sucking and Pacifiers.
- 4.- What Every Parent Should Know About Vaccines. Paul Offit, M.D., Louis Bell, M.D. Macmillan USA, 1998.