

Childhood Health

By Hannah Conry

I often get the question “what do you do when your kids get sick?” Well, for the most part my kids don’t get sick. Every once in a while they get a little bit of a drippy nose or a small cough that affects them for a few days, but other than that they really don’t get sick. There are certain things that we do in my house to reduce the likelihood of my boys coming down with anything. I have compiled a list of a few lifestyle choices that my family follows that I believe contribute to the health of my children.

Breastfeeding

Breast milk is the perfect, custom tailored food for your baby. Not only does it contain the correct ratio of nutrients for your baby at each stage of development, but it also helps to boost the immune system by providing antibodies for whatever exposure the mother has had. I am a true believer in long term breastfeeding. The World Health Organization advocates exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and continued breastfeeding to two years and beyond.

Chiropractic Care

Chiropractic care boosts a person's immune system by removing stress from the nervous system. Children are constantly falling as they explore their world. These falls can cause subluxations which lead to dysfunction in the nervous system and discomfort. Chiropractic care not only helps to line everything back up, but also helps to determine areas of constitutional weakness that can be addressed in many ways. When these areas of constitutional weakness are recognized and worked on early a more fulfilled state of health can be achieved by the child. There was a study that was recently done comparing the rate of ear infections in children of chiropractors versus the rate of ear infections in children of pediatricians. The findings show that within this study there were no ear infections for children of chiropractors and the children of pediatricians had the normal incidence of ear infections. My children only receive care from a chiropractor.

No Vaccines

This is a very touchy subject for people. I believe that there is a place for vaccines, but the current vaccine schedule is out of hand. I choose not to vaccinate my children. The reason I make this choice is because I, for the most part, control their environment and do a multitude of other things to keep them healthy and their immune systems strong so that if they do come down with something they have a solid foundation to fight infection. That being said, if I were to be traveling with them outside of the country I would assess the risks of the area we were traveling to and decide which vaccines I would do for them. Vaccines contain a huge amount of additives and preservatives that I do not want my children exposed to.

No Antibiotics

Antibiotics have their place, but they are way over used these days. Not every childhood sniffle requires an antibiotic! If you go straight for an antibiotic at the onset of every illness your child has no chance of building their immune system naturally. The more germs your child is exposed to the healthier their immune systems become. Allow your child's own defenses a chance to grow and strengthen. The more antibiotic exposure a person has the less those antibiotics can help them in the future as their system builds resistance to the antibiotics. I would prefer to save antibiotics for when they are the only answer for healing. Also, antibiotics are indiscriminate killers of bacteria meaning that they kill off the bad bacteria *and* the good bacteria (like the healthy gut flora that helps you digest and assimilate your food).

Diet

My children eat an organic, whole foods based diet and mostly drink water. The food that we ingest becomes the cellular building blocks for our system. Start your kids with the best, most solid foundation possible. I expose my children to a wide variety of vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, seeds, meat, and grains. I hide vegetables in their food wherever I can as they are still young and sometimes resistant to eating their veggies. I keep their diet simple and fresh. On occasion they get a treat (organic ice cream or organic gluten free boxed mac and cheese), but not that often. The better fuel they get the healthier they are.

Dirt

Numerous recent studies have linked the increase of asthma, allergies, and other immune dysfunction to being too clean! We as a society are obsessed with cleanliness and especially with keeping our children wiped down and sanitized at all times. This is actually a disservice to our children. They need exposure to germs in order to build a healthy immune system. Dirt is good for kids! Rolling in the dirt, playing with animals, eating food off of the floor, and licking everything is healthy and immune boosting. I am very liberal in allowing my children to get dirty and I have never used hand sanitizer on them.

Sun

I let my kids play in the sun with abandon. Not only is it good for them to be outside and get some sun on their skin, but this practice also helps them to naturally synthesize vitamin D. Our bodies need vitamin D and the best way to get it is from the sun and from our diet. Proper intake/synthesis of vitamin D up-regulates the immune system, helps regulate proper intestinal health and absorption, and vitamin D has been shown to have both anti-bacterial and anti-viral effect in the body. Wearing sunblock hinders the bodies ability to synthesize vitamin D from the sun. I avoid sunblock on my kids as much as possible and reserve it's use for say a full day at the beach. Usually, if we are going to be outside for more then an hour or so in direct sunlight, I make sure that they are covered by wearing pants, long sleeves, and sun hats. Let your kids get some sun.

Limited Media Exposure and Screen Time

If I had my way we would not own a TV, but I haven't convinced my husband yet. My boys are only allowed TV on the weekends. On Saturday and Sunday they can each pick one mommy approved show to watch each or mutually decide on a movie. That is it. No other video games or computer time. This allows for more time to play creatively using their imaginations, more time in the dirt, and more time in the sun.

Supplements

My kids take their vitamins every morning before breakfast. Kids need supplements just like we adults do. If we lived on a pristine, organic farm, ate mostly vegetables, the air was pollution free, and our water came from a completely clean source on our property we would not need to supplement ourselves or our kids. Again, the supplementation is about giving our kids the best foundation we possibly can and setting up life long healthy habits. Here are the things my kids take everyday:

Multiple- This gives them a base of essential minerals and vitamins. I use the Biotics Aqueous Multi-Plus.

Zinc- Most people are zinc deficient these days. We get zinc from our fruits and veggies, which most people do not eat enough of, and they get zinc from the soil, and our soil is so depleted these days, that this leads to the almost universal deficiency. Zinc helps to boost your immune system, boost brain power, is essential for growth and cell division, and much more. I use Biotics Aqueous Zinc and give my kids a tablespoon a day.

Vitamin C-We all know vitamin C is good for the immune system. It is also an antioxidant and an antihistamine. Ideally we get our vitamin C from our diet (citrus and dark leafy greens being the highest in vitamin C), but I give my kids a little extra each day. There are many options for supplementing with vitamin C. In the straight form it tends to be very sour and hard for kids to palate. Check ingredients on any kids vitamin C you are looking to purchase and try to avoid fillers, additives, colors, and excess sugar.

Pre and Probiotics- These are for good intestinal health. The majority of our immune system and disease fighting capability comes from our gut. There are many things that contribute to gut dysbiosis two of which are antibiotics and being born by cesarean. Probiotics build healthy gut flora and prebiotics act as food for the healthy flora. Biotics has a few different probiotics. My kids take BioDophilus-FOS at a teaspoon a day. For prebiotics they get Bernard Jensen's Health-A-Whey at a tablespoon a day.

Fish Oil- Has been praised for helping to control inflammation and increase heart health for a long time, but has recently been found to help the immune system by boosting white blood cells. My kids take a tablespoon of Barlean's emulsified fish oil each day. It comes in a bunch of great flavors to choose from and is easy to get in the kids.