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Dr. Norina Ocampo a pediatrician at West Boca Medical Center is interviewed on the myths of vaccinated your children.

Vexed about Vaccines?

Childhood Vaccine Controversy: 5 Myths



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Rumors have circulated that childhood vaccines cause autism, sudden infant death syndrome, epileptic seizures, allergies, multiple sclerosis, and autoimmune diseases, among other things. Dr. Norina O'Campo, pediatrician at West Boca Medical Center, breaks down the controversy for us.

- **Myth: Immunization against measles, mumps and rubella causes autism.**

• A study published in the '90s linking autism to the vaccines ignited an uproar. That study was flawed due to a small sample size, O'Campo says, and numerous studies have since disproved its claim. Autism is on the rise while the rate of vaccinations has remained steady during the last 20 years, she points out. Autism is caused by a chromosomal abnormality determined before a baby is born, not vaccines, she says.
- **Myth: Incidence of illnesses like smallpox, whooping cough, tuberculosis and measles has decreased solely because national hygiene has improved.**

• While it's true that reduced poverty and increased sanitation and water quality has lessened the occurrence of disease, these diseases couldn't have diminished without vaccination, she says. She explains the concept of herd immunity – the more people who are immune to the disease, the less likely you are to come into contact with the virus in the first place.
- **Myth: Flu shots are dangerous for pregnant women.**

• Flu shots have absolutely been proven safe for pregnant women, O'Campo says, and highly recommends them to promote the health of the baby. "Any severe illness will increase a mother's chance of having a spontaneous abortion," she says. A lack of oxygen to the fetus if the mother is ill can also increase the risk of brain damage.
- **Myth: Getting multiple vaccinations at once can cause vaccine overload, increasing the chance of illness and decreasing a vaccine's effectiveness.**

• "Whether you get one vaccine or multiple, the risk is the same," she says. While multiple vaccinations expose a child to several antigens at once, what people don't take into account, she says, is that children are exposed to a multitude of antigens every single day already. She adds that the vaccine antigens won't interact or cancel each other out.
- **Myth: The risks of vaccination outweigh the benefits of preventing rare diseases.**

• Meningitis used to kill about 8,000 people a year and it now kills maybe 100 – thanks to vaccination, O'Campo says. No studies have proven a link between vaccination and epilepsy, sudden infant death syndrome, multiple sclerosis or other diseases, she says, and vaccination saves the health-care industry billions of dollars every year. Delaying vaccination can prove fatal, she says, because once a virus enters your body, it's there for the rest of your life – and at that point vaccination can't save you.