

DANGEROUS GERMS:

The Low-Down on Shots and Soaps

Just when you think you've got this parenting thing figured out, new research comes along that refutes everything you've been doing since Day One. If you've been debating the merits of flu mists and antibacterial soaps, here's the scoop on the latest research to help you make the best choices for your family.

■ Flu Vaccine

Hoping to save your kids the pain of a flu shot this fall, opting instead for the painless nasal spray vaccine? You're in luck! According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, the organization recommends that all children ages six months and older receive either the injectable flu vaccine or the nasal spray vaccine for the best protection during the 2019-20 flu season. This year's recommendation differs slightly from last year, when AAP cited a preference for the flu shot over the nasal spray.

Vaccine effectiveness can vary from one flu season to the next. For the 2019-2020 flu season, the AAP and US Centers for Disease Control and Protection support the use of the nasal spray vaccine – or live attenuated

influenza vaccine (LAIV4). The goal? To provide the best protection and adequate vaccination coverage in children of all ages.

"All children six months and older should receive the flu vaccine, in whatever form their pediatrician recommends," said Bonnie Maldonado, MD, FAAP, chair of the AAP Committee on Infectious Diseases. "Every year, we are never sure if the vaccine strains are going to be perfectly matched up with incoming flu strains, but based on the information that we have now, we believe the nasal spray is an acceptable option."

Bottom line: Make sure your kids receive the flu vaccine in preparation for flu season. Don't forget to protect yourself; make sure Mom and Dad also get their flu shot.

■ Antibacterial Soaps

You can skip the expensive antibacterial soap the next time you're stocking up on supermarket essentials and instead buy less expensive, plain ol' soap. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued a statement that manufacturers can no longer market consumer antibacterial washes containing certain active ingredients, including the most



commonly used ingredients – triclosan and triclocarban. Manufacturers failed to demonstrate the ingredients are both safe for long-term daily use and more effective than plain soap and water.

"Consumers may think antibacterial washes are more effective at preventing the spread of germs, but we have no scientific evidence that they are any better than plain soap and water," said Janet Woodcock, M.D., director of the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER).

What to do if soap and water aren't available? The CDC recommends using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

– Lisa A. Beach

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