

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness segment, where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. My guest today is Amy Fisher. She is a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner who is going to also be our guest speaker at this month's Living Well series. We're here to preview that and invite our listeners to join us. Good morning, Amy.

Amy Fisher, PNP: Good morning, Katie.

Katie Johnson: Well, as I mentioned our Living Well series happens every month at Lake Region Healthcare from September through May and November's session is featuring you as our Keynote speaker, along with a community member who has a personal story about the importance of vaccinations and immunizations. My first question for you is, is there a difference between a vaccination and an immunization?

Amy Fisher, PNP: Well, a vaccine is the medication that you give to the person to stimulate an immune response. Then when the body responds to that, that's your immunization. It's our immune response to the vaccine.

Katie Johnson: Immunization is what you get as a result of your vaccination.

Amy Fisher, PNP: That is correct.

Katie Johnson: Wow, got it. All right. There are some myths that are out there around this topic and I'm sure that you hear these from parents when they're visiting your office. What kinds of rumors are you hearing today and any that are particularly troublesome?

Amy Fisher, PNP: Well, the first thing I like is for parents to have done their reading from a reputable source and to be making their decision to be well-educated on the immunizations that they themselves, or their children are receiving, and why they're receiving them. There's some old information out there where people accuse vaccines of causing some issues, such as causing autism when there's no studies that support that they do cause that. That's not really a substantiated accusation. I always respect people's rights and their ... I like them to make an educated decision on what they're doing.

Katie Johnson: You mentioned the autism one being an older myth maybe that still has not had any substantiation from what I understand. Any other myths out there that you commonly hear about?

Amy Fisher, PNP: Well, there's myths that you get the influenza vaccine and then you get influenza. When in fact, the influenza vaccine is not a live vaccine, so you cannot actually get influenza from the vaccine. Perhaps you've already been exposed to another virus, or influenza at the time you're getting the vaccine. You may be

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more ... Then you will get an illness, but it's not as a result of the vaccine. You could've gotten it from wherever you're at, an athletic activity and somebody coughed all over you, or you just don't know what we're being exposed to. That's why we really encourage having all your immunizations up to date, as well as good hand washing.

Katie Johnson: For sure. What about the argument for natural immunity?

Amy Fisher, PNP: Well, first of all there's something called herd immunity, when everybody else is vaccinated and let's say I have an allergy to an ingredient in the immunization, by everybody else being immunized, they're actually protecting me through herd immunity. When people say, "Well, I'm not vaccinating my child against whatever the vaccine is, because we don't see that much anymore," that's because everybody's been immunized and the more people who do not get immunized, the more likely that disease is going to come back. A great example of that is pertussis. We've had resurgence of pertussis over the years because people backed off on immunizing their kids. Polio is another great one that we were very close to eradicating that worldwide, like the small pox vaccine has been eradicated. Then people backed off on their immunizations and it kind of started popping up in different places again before we got it fully eradicated.

Katie Johnson: What about the cost of immunizations? Is that ever an argument or a barrier?

Amy Fisher, PNP: My history as a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner would be, let's say we're talking about the pertussis vaccine in particular. It's much cheaper to give that immunization, than to have that child hospitalized potentially on a ventilator in a pediatric ICU, versus the cost of that immunization. Not only that one hospitalization, but the long-term effects it can have on their lungs as well. It's not a one-time cost, it's ... It affects their overall general health and quality of life.

Katie Johnson: Absolutely. What about the vaccination schedule for kids in general? Is it something that ... My kids are older now, but I remember it being a little bit overwhelming and I'm so thankful that people like you stay on top of it so that I don't have to. There are a lot of them.

Amy Fisher, PNP: There are. Sometimes when you just look at the schedule, there's some on CDC.gov that have the schedule and it's made actually for parents, so it's not so wordy and it's a little bit more straightforward so you can actually see which immunizations they need at what time. The ones that get really probably overwhelming for parents is when they get behind, and how do you catch them up, and which ones did they get when? That can be more confusing. Overall, I mean, just to quickly overview the general ages when we give immunizations would be two months, four months, six months, a year, and then 15 and/or 18 months, so that they're pretty immunized fully by the age of two is the goal. Then they get immunized again before kindergarten, but again, we always encourage after six months of age an annual influenza vaccine.

Katie Johnson: We've talked a lot about kids and of course that's your area of expertise, but in the session next Monday when we're talking immunizations and vaccinations, we are expanding that to include the importance of adults in this whole equation. Adults need some too.

Amy Fisher, PNP: Yeah. People think immunizations are just for children, but we've always needed immunizations. The tetanus vaccine you need a minimum of every 10 years. There's other immunizations out there for shingles for older adults, for pneumococcal illnesses, pneumonia, things like that. I'm not an expert in the adult vaccines, but it's a lifelong protection that we need to be giving. We're also looking at it's important for parents and grandparents, or people who are going to be around newborns to make sure their pertussis is up to date, so we're not giving these newborns who cannot get pertussis till they're at least six to eight weeks old, giving them that disease.

Katie Johnson: Every age really does play a role in a well immunized community. We mentioned that this Living Well series is coming up next Monday night November 13th, and in addition to yourself, we have another speaker, Becca Michaels, who has a personal story about her premature baby as I understand it. Can you give our listeners a little preview of what she will talk about?

Amy Fisher, PNP: Well, she's going to talk about the importance of vaccines, not just your immunization schedule, but also a medication that her child needed during certain months of the year that premature babies get to help protect them from a disease called RSV. That's also an important thing. I know we as visitors to someone who has a new baby, or perhaps a premature baby, we're so excited to see that child, but we may also bring things with us that that child shouldn't have, such as a virus, or some other type of illness. Those infants are vulnerable and it's important for us to help the parents protect them and remember that baby comes first.

Katie Johnson: Anything else that you would like to share with us on this topic, or advice you give our listeners who want to learn more about vaccinations and immunization?

Amy Fisher, PNP: One of the things is always trying to keep yourself up on your immunizations, or perhaps asking your primary care provider, "Are my immunizations up to date? Are there any that I need today?" www.CDC.gov is a great place to go to look for what immunizations are due at what time. It will talk about side effects of immunizations, the diseases associated with that immunization, and why you're getting that vaccine. I really think it's important to know what you're being protected against and why are we doing this. Rather than doing it because somebody recommends it, or somebody discourages it, you need to be a self-advocate and know what you're getting, why you're getting it, or why your child is getting that vaccine to help protect them.

When we talk about not immunizing, I think it's important to think about people other than ourselves. Let's say for instance I'm not immunized, and I come to the clinic, and I sit next to somebody who is perhaps immunocompromised. Maybe

they're on high levels of steroids, maybe they're on chemotherapy and I have pertussis and they catch that. That may be a life threatening illness for them. They may not survive. It's important to think about we're not just not immunizing ourselves, but we're helping others who could be at risk or may not be able to get that immunization for whatever reason at that time. We need to think about everyone, and the general health of the community, and our neighbor.

Katie Johnson: Absolutely. We invite people to attend on Monday night. As you mentioned earlier, everyone has the right to make their own decision, but we would ask that it be a well-informed decision. This is a way that you can get more information about immunization and vaccinations and be that well-informed consumer. Again, it's this coming Monday night November 13th in our clinic lobby and it's free for anyone to attend. Again, it is no charge. We do serve a light meal at this event, so it helps us if you let us know that you're coming. You can do that by emailing LivingWell@LRHC.org, or by calling us at 218-736-8699. Now, just because you don't RSVP, don't let that stop you from showing up. If your plans change on Monday night, swing into the clinic lobby, 5:45 is our start time and we have everyone out by 7pm. Amy, we look forward to hearing more about what you have to say about immunizations and vaccinations at the Living Well series next Monday night and we hope our listeners will join us. Thanks for your time this morning.

Amy Fisher, PNP: Thank you.

Katie Johnson: Amy Fisher, Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, my guest this morning on Apple a Day. Amy and Katie reminding you that there is so much to do here, stay healthy for it. Have a great day.