1. When Does My Child Need to Go to the Doctor?

At a Glance...

Parents will take their children to the doctor for well-child examinations, immunizations, and illness signs and symptoms that concern the parent.

Objective

Participants will know when to take their children to the doctor.

Materials

- Flip chart with marker or chalkboard with chalk
- "My Child's Health Information" handout (C-1-a)
- "Childhood Immunization Record" handout (C-1-b)
- "Basic Health Tips for Keeping Your Child Healthy" handout (C-1-c)

Core Concepts

- Well-child visits are important.
- Immunizations protect your child.
- As a parent, you know your child better than anyone.
Facilitator's Script

There are many reasons why we might decide to take our children to see the doctor. Let's do some brainstorming and see what some of those reasons might be.

This brainstorming session is called "The Round Robin." As facilitator, you will go around the room asking each participant to give only one response. You will repeat another round until the group has exhausted all responses. This process allows every participant to respond and prevents one or two participants from dominating the discussion.

Write down the responses on the flip chart. Possible responses include:

- Well-child visits
- Shots (immunizations)
- Weight and height
- Developmental changes
- Sickness/fever
- Behavior changes (such as crying, cranky, diarrhea, constipation, lack of appetite, or not sleeping),
- Physical changes (such as swelling, discharge, wound, frequent urination, vomiting, cough, pain, or cold)

Add any items that participants forget to name.

Let's spend a bit more time on three topics: 1) well-child visits, 2) immunizations, and 3) when to call the doctor.

On a separate sheet of paper or on a clean spot on the chalkboard, write these words:

- Well-child visits
- Immunizations
- When to call the doctor

In the discussion that follows, write participants' responses under each topic. Encourage participants to ask questions about any of these reasons why someone might take a child to see the doctor.
1. **Well-child visits (or check-up visits) are important.**

They allow your doctor or health care provider to review your child's growth and development, perform tests, and give immunizations. The doctor will ask about your child's family health history and ask questions about your child's health habits, such as sleeping, eating and activity. As your child gets older the doctor will ask your child these questions rather than you.

To help your doctor get a complete picture of your child's health, bring your child's health record. Let's take a look at the "Child's Health Information Record."

Distribute the "My Child's Health Information." (C-1-a). Review the record with the group.

It is easy to forget much of this information as you child grows and especially if you have several children. Set up a file for keeping this record and other medical information for your child and other family members.

Check-up visits are a time for you to ask questions. Encourage your child to ask questions, too. This will teach your child to be comfortable with the doctor and to become an advocate for his or her health. Bring a list of your concerns with you. Making a list ahead of time helps you remember to ask important questions.

What kinds of problems have you asked the doctor about your children?

Allow participants to respond. Possible answers include:
- My child is not sleeping through the night.
- I don't think my child is eating enough.
- My child is having behavior problems at school.

Has anyone felt uncomfortable about asking questions or felt intimidated by the doctor?

Allow participants to respond.
It is important to be an advocate for your child. You should be able to express your feelings and concerns in an open and caring setting. If you are uncomfortable with your doctor or feel your doctor is not interested in your concerns, you may want to find another doctor. Your doctor's office is your medical home -- a place where you feel safe and know that people care about you and your child.

Well-child visits are recommended at these ages:

- 2-4 weeks
- 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15 and 18 months
- 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16 and 18 years

Some children may need to be seen more often, others less. Ask your doctor how often your child will need to be seen.

2. **The second topic we're going to discuss is immunizations, or shots.**

Why do you think your children need immunizations?

Write their suggestions on the flip chart or chalkboard. You may have some parents in your class who have concerns about getting their children immunized. Their reasons may include:

- Religious or philosophic objections.
- Mandatory immunizations being seen as interference by the government in their personal choices.
- Concern about the safety of immunizations.
- Belief that diseases that can be prevented by immunization do not pose a serious threat.

As a facilitator, it is not your role to change people's minds. Rather, recommend to any participants who have concerns to discuss them with their doctor.

Stay positive. Focus on the reasons why doctors recommend immunizations. Later in this lesson, you will share information on the safety and effectiveness of immunizations.
Immunizations (shots) protect your child from:

- Infectious diseases that cause serious illnesses
- Complications such as brain damage, paralysis, deafness, blindness or even death.

Distribute handout "Childhood Immunization Record" (C-1-b).

Immunizations should be given at the recommended times on the Childhood Immunization Record (C-1-b).

How do immunizations work? If your child is not vaccinated and is exposed to a disease germ, your child’s body may not be strong enough to fight the disease. The immunization, however, causes the child’s body to develop immunity to the disease.

Before immunizations, many children died of the diseases that immunizations now prevent.

What are some of the diseases that childhood immunizations prevent?

List the participants ideas on the flip chart or chalkboard. Ideas include:

- Hepatitis
- Polio
- Measles
- Mump
- Diphtheria
- Chickenpox.
- German measles (rubella)
- Whooping cough
- Lockjaw (tetanus)
- Influenza

These same germs exist today, but babies and children are now protected by immunizations, so we do not see these diseases as often.

How do immunizations work?
Vaccines create immunity by boosting the body's natural immune response. Most vaccines contain components of microorganisms or toxins that have been markedly weakened so that they are no longer capable of causing disease. When these vaccines are injected or taken orally, the immune system's cells recognize the invading germ and fight it. This prevents the body from developing the disease.

If the child is exposed to the disease after being vaccinated, the body's immune system will recognize the invading germs and destroy them.

Let's take a look at the "Childhood Immunization Record," which was passed out earlier. When are most immunizations completed?

**Answer:** Birth to 18 months.

It is important to start your child's immunizations at birth, and most are completed by age two. It is especially important to get these shots on time to prevent your child from catching these diseases when they are at day cares or other public settings. Babies are more susceptible to catching these diseases than older children.

The state of Tennessee requires all school-aged children to be immunized. Again, referring to the "Immunization Record" handout, which additional shots must a child have just before school?

Refer to the handout "Childhood Immunization Records" (C-1-b).

**Answer:** The fourth polio shot, and the fifth DPT shot, and the second MMR shot are required between ages 4 and 6.

"Catch-up" shots are those that must be given because they were not given at the recommended time. Look at the "Childhood Immunization Record" (C-1-b) and identify what the catch-up shots are.

**Answer:** Hepatitis B, MMR and Varicella.
Vaccines are safe and effective. Adverse events may be a sore arm or a mild fever. Research has shown that taking multiple immunizations is safe.

Even though vaccine-preventable disease (such as polio and measles) are virtually eliminated in the United States, children still need to be immunized. These diseases are still prevalent and even epidemic in other parts of the world. Travelers and immigrants can bring these diseases into the United States.

3. **The third topic we will discuss is when a parent should call the child's doctor.** You know your child better than anyone else does. Whenever your child has a symptom that concerns you, you should not hesitate to call your child's doctor.

Some symptoms that may require a doctor's attention include:

- Changes in weight or eating habits
- Changes in behavior or sleep patterns
- Failure to increase in height as expected
- Temperature over 102 degrees Fahrenheit that persists or recurs
- Frequent vomiting or diarrhea
- Inability to hold down liquids
- Signs of skin infection
- Severe sore throat
- Difficulty breathing
- Persistent cough
- Localized pain, such as an ear infection
- Nasal fluid that is discolored, bad-smelling or bloody
- Ear infection

Fevers in infants and young children are very frightening to parents. A fever is not harmful. In fact, it may help the body fight infections more effectively. "Fever" is usually defined as a rectal temperature above 100.4 degrees or an oral temperature above 99.8 degrees. Children tend to run higher fevers than adults. Although high fevers are uncomfortable, they do not often cause medical problems.
To provide the necessary health care for your child, it is important to have health insurance. If any of you are having any problems getting health insurance, call the TennCare toll-free number. It is 1-800-669-1851.

Write the phone number on the flip chart or chalkboard:
1-800-669-1851. Also, write the Web site address, where they may get more information: www.state.tn.us/tenncare/

Something else that is important to your children's health is regular dental check-ups. You should have your child brush his or her teeth twice a day, preferably after breakfast and before bedtime. They should floss daily, too. As a parent, be a good role model for your children by brushing your teeth and flossing daily as well. It will promote your long-term health, too!

In addition to knowing when to take your child to the doctor, there are other important responsibilities for keeping your child healthy.

In closing, I'd like each of you to state one thing you have learned today and one thing you plan to do as a result of this session.

Ask each participant to share in turn.
# Childhood Immunization Record

Write date of shot in the box under each child’s name; indicate any negative reactions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immunization</th>
<th>Age needed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hepatitis B</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(HBV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Birth to 2 months</td>
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<td>2 1 to 4 months</td>
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<td>3 6 to 18 months</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Catch-up HBV vaccine</strong></td>
<td>11 to 12 years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Haemophilus influenza type B (HIB)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 months</td>
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<td>4 months</td>
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<td>6 months</td>
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<td>12 to 15 months</td>
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<td><strong>Polio</strong></td>
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<td>2 months</td>
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<td>6 to 18 months</td>
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<td>4 to 6 years</td>
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<td><strong>Diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus (DPT)</strong></td>
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<td>2 months</td>
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<td>4 months</td>
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<td>15 to 18 months</td>
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<td>4 to 6 years</td>
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<td><strong>Tetanus</strong></td>
<td>11 to 12 years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)</strong></td>
<td>12 to 15 months</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MMR catch-up vaccine</strong></td>
<td>4 to 6 years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Varicella</strong> (chicken pox)</td>
<td>12 to 18 months</td>
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<td><strong>Varicella catch-up vaccine</strong></td>
<td>11 to 12 years</td>
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# My Child's Health Information

## Childhood diseases

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>Date</th>
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## Major illness or surgery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name of illness/Type of surgery</th>
<th>Doctor</th>
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## Child's medications

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Name of medication</th>
<th>Amount taken each day</th>
<th>Reason</th>
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Basic Health Tips for Keeping Your Child Healthy

Check (✔️) those health tips you are doing. Work on those you don't check.

- Take your child for medical and dental check-ups.
- Keep your child’s shots up-to-date.
- Feed your child healthful foods.
- Have your child brush his or her teeth twice a day and floss at least once a day.
- See that your child exercises on a regular basis.
- Don’t smoke. Don’t let your child smoke.
- Teach your child to wash his or her hands after going to the toilet and before eating.
- Protect your child from child abuse.
- Protect your child from alcohol and drugs as she or he grows up.
- Teach your child about drugs, alcohol, sexuality, AIDS, and birth control as she or he grows up.
- Set a good example. Be a health role model to your child.
- **Listen** to and **love** your child.