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NEW SCHEDULE APPROVED FOR IMMUNIZATION OF NORMAL INFANTS AND CHILDREN

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has approved a new schedule for active immunization of normal infants and children. The ACIP now recommends that measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTP) toxoids and vaccine and oral polio vaccine (OPV) be simultaneously administered to all children 15 months old or older who are eligible to receive these vaccines.

Until now, the recommended schedule called for administering MMR vaccine at 15 months and giving the fourth dose of DTP and the third dose of OPV at 18 months. The old schedule required two visits in the second year of life in order to receive these vaccines. Simultaneous administration of MMR, DTP and OPV was previously recommended for children who were behind schedule in receiving their immunizations. Recent studies have shown no differences in the safety or serological response rate of the two vaccine schedules.

Implementation of the new vaccination schedule will result in at least three major benefits:

1. A decrease in the number of physician and other health care provider visits required for immunization during the second year of life,
2. An accompanying decrease in costs, and
3. An increase in the percentage of children who will be fully or partially immunized by 24 months of age.

Some health care providers may continue to prefer administering MMR at 15 months followed by DTP and OPV at 18 months. Such a schedule remains an acceptable alternative to the new recommendations to simultaneously administer DTP, MMR, and OPV in a single visit.

(from *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 35 (37): 577-79, 1986).