

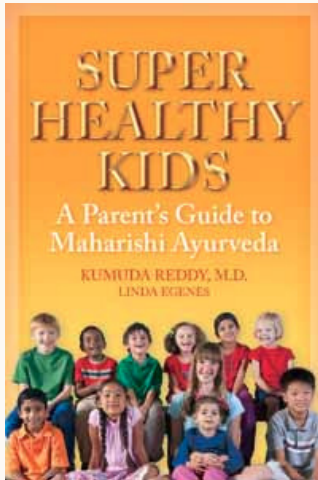
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Why Kids Get Sick

And How Parents Can Prevent Further Illness

BY KUMUDA REDDY, M.D., WITH LINDA EGENES



The following is excerpted from the new book Super Healthy Kids: A Parent's Guide to Maharishi Ayurveda.

A mother named Julie brought her son Tyler to my office when he was two years old. Tyler suffered from an acute upper respiratory infection and bronchitis. For the past six months, he had taken many rounds of antibiotics, which weakened his immune system. Each time he took antibiotics he did get better at first, but then immediately afterward he would relapse into bronchitis again.

The child was miserable and looked unhealthy. His breathing was labored and difficult, and he was underweight.

A Stressed Pregnancy

In discussing the family history with Julie, I found that with her first child she had only worked part time during pregnancy and was able to take care of herself. Her first son was born a robust nine pounds and remained healthy.

During her pregnancy with Tyler, on the other hand, she had just started a challenging and stressful full-time job that required her to work seven days a week. She didn't eat regular meals or rest enough. She felt that taking prenatal vitamins and making regular visits to the obstetrician was enough to produce a healthy child.

But Tyler weighed only six pounds, six ounces at birth, and from the start faced constant health problems. He suffered from infections, colic, and difficulty sleeping. In general, Julie felt that he was much more unhappy than his brother. Understandably, it's hard for a child to be happy when he's feeling miserable inside. What Julie was seeing on the outside was a reflection of Tyler's inner state of ill health.

Change in Care

A few days after applying the treatments of Maharishi Ayurveda—which included changes in diet, herbal food supplements, and changes in daily routine—Julie reported that Tyler's symptoms were subsiding. He was much more happy and energetic. He took more interest in his toys and games. As the treatments progressed, he and his brother started to get along better.

Within six months, Tyler grew two inches, his coloring became normal, and he looked much healthier. He had broken through the vicious cycle of constant coughs and colds and the weakening rounds of antibiotics. Today, Tyler behaves like any other happy, healthy child.

"I never thought he'd escape from the cycle of sickness," said Julie. "It's wonderful to see him so

happy.”

Treating Symptoms is Not Enough

This is a common scenario that I see in my office. A child gets sick with a cold, cough, fever, or the flu. The mother consults a Western physician. The child is prescribed antibiotics along with antihistamines, decongestants, and cough medicines. These provide temporary relief for the infection, but are treating symptoms only, because these prescription drugs don't address the underlying imbalance that is causing the child to be prone to congestion in the first place. Worse, the antibiotics actually weaken immunity by destroying helpful organisms in the digestive tract. Antihistamines also break down immunity and disrupt digestion, throwing the child's system further off balance. The next time he is exposed to an infectious disease, his immunity is weaker and he succumbs more quickly, bringing on another round of antibiotics and antihistamines. The child is constantly falling sick—and the treatments become part of the problem.

Sadly, there are many American children who end up in pediatricians' offices once a week or several times a month. Then it becomes a chronic problem. The child loses his liveliness and becomes depressed and irritable. He also becomes more prone to other diseases.

Maharishi Ayurveda provides a new model for breaking out of this routine and creating health for a child who is locked in the cycle of sickness.

A New Concept of Immunity

According to the traditional view, children are more prone to flu, colds, upper respiratory infections, and other illnesses because their immune systems are untested. As they grow up, the conventional wisdom goes, they develop resistance to disease and thus don't get sick as frequently. The only thing the conventional doctor has to offer to boost immunity is immunization shots for major infectious diseases, and later, when a child succumbs to illness, antibiotics.

Maharishi Ayurveda presents a different concept of immunity. Immunity is the internal strength, or *bala*, that comes from the body type, or *dosha*, being in balance, the digestion and metabolism functioning normally, and the tissues growing properly. Immunity comes from the inside, from eating a balanced diet, having a strong digestion, and following a healthy routine. Prevention of disease results from strengthening immunity, which essentially means strengthening digestion.

In Western medicine, the focus is on chasing the germs and then killing them. Maharishi Ayurveda focuses on strengthening the body so the germ is no longer a threat. You probably have noticed that even though several children may be exposed to the same virus or flu bug, only some of them get sick. The difference lies in how balanced the children's doshas are, their level of vitality, and their internal immunity.

Why are children more susceptible to certain childhood diseases than adults? The answer from Maharishi Ayurveda is that children are in a unique stage of life, called kapha kala (from birth to age 30), during which kapha dosha predominates. This is when the child builds strong bones, muscles, organs, and the brain—and this formation of the physical structure of the body is largely a function of kapha dosha.

Kapha dosha predominates in many ways during this period. For instance, very young children display the qualities of the slow-moving, heavy kapha dosha; they have a higher percentage of body fat than adults, spend longer periods in sleep, and display a slower reaction time. If a small child falls down, often there is a delay before he or she starts crying or even comprehends the hurt.

At the same time, children are also more prone to kapha imbalances than adults. When kapha dosha is out of balance, its heavy and sticky qualities can lead to slow digestion and excess mucus production in the body. Thus children are more prone to certain kapha-related diseases, such as respiratory disorders, colds, flu, and childhood diseases such as chicken pox, measles, and mumps.

By understanding this one point, you can shape your child's diet and daily routine to avoid excessive kapha.

For example, you can reduce "kapha-increasing" foods in your child's diet. Excessive sweets, ice-cold soft drinks, aged cheeses, and processed foods—which are difficult to digest and lead to sluggish digestion—can be dramatically decreased without depriving the child of needed nutrients.

The daily routine can also be adjusted to avoid kapha imbalance. Sleeping late in the morning, for instance, can increase kapha and diminish digestive power for older children, as can lack of exercise.

These are just a few of the many simple recommendations that can increase your child's health dramatically.

Super Healthy Kids: A Parent's Guide to Maharishi Ayurveda is available at www.mumpress.com and mapi.com.

Author Linda Egenes will sign books and give a short talk on Friday, August 6, 2010, 7:00-8:30 p.m., at the Health and Wholeness store in Fairfield during the 1st Fridays Artwalk. The whole family is invited for kid-friendly treats.

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