



## Anti-Vaxxers are No Laughing Matter; More's the Pity

Lifestyle & Health

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Yet more bloody kids have gone down with nasty cases of the measles, here, in the US, courtesy of high-minded parents who've somehow managed to convinced themselves of the dubious merits, nay, unseen perils of vaccination.

For the uninitiated...hopefully, not the unvaccinated...what, pray, is an 'anti-vaxxer' when he or she's at home? No debate there: it's a parent that refuses to vaccinate their kids for any number of self-professed reasons; any and all of which are frankly erroneous.

Now, while I fully appreciate any and every parent's concern for their child's wellbeing and continued welfare, I find myself utterly bewildered at how very easily it is, these days, for "emotionally charged belief" to trounce "long-proven effectiveness."

The plain, unadulterated truth is that the practice of vaccination protects people, especially infants and children, against outbreaks of deadly diseases. Vaccines work and save lives; their discovery a turning point in public health, the world over.

But experts now say that several highly contagious diseases that are completely avoidable are making a comeback due to the increasing number of 'anti-vaxxers'. Which, of course, not only puts everyone else's kids at serious risk, it puts parents and teachers and everyone else at risk, too.

God give me strength. These 'anti-vaxxers' should have been around when the terror lurking round every corner was, heaven forefend, polio, let alone mumps or the measles.

Afraid of getting a jab? Us kids couldn't line up fast enough. We didn't want to die or get crippled for life; or be laid up in an iron lung in some hospital forever and a day; we wanted to go out and play football or go "train-spotting." And, me, I worshipped the ground that any doctor walked on, just as long as he or she had my best interests at heart and had in their hands any relevant concoction of 'anti' anything. I'm no mug. I got the point of it all, even, back then. And thank you very much and on with the play.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, there were at least 500,000 reports of measles, annually, before the measles vaccine was made widely available in the US, in 1963. Although, the CDC, themselves, freely admit that many more cases likely went unreported. The further sickening statistic: at least 500 of those annual cases always proved to be fatal.

Yet, despite the mass of scientific evidence that supports the effectiveness of vaccines, the latest rash of measles just continues to grow; with well over 900 cases and counting, now, in 26 States across the US; the worst outbreak in 25 years.

“We don't know how to combat this,” said a professor of infectious diseases at Stanford University School of Medicine, recently, when quizzed about the outbreak of ‘anti-vaxxers’. “We used to be able to tell people: ‘This is science’.”

Not any longer. For it seems that the veritable mountain of misguided information to be found on the Internet, now trumps everything else.

And all I could do when I read that; my worst suspicions confirmed; was to shake my head in bewilderment and no little despair. All of which is to say I needed a very definite pick me up. And, no, a shot of Vitamin B into the buttocks wasn't even remotely a consideration.

Then, laughter always being the best medicine, out of the proverbial blue, there came wondrous balm from a dear friend. Any and every missive, from whom, I take very seriously and to heart, as there's always much food for thought.

This time he'd sent me a copy of a very pithy polemic pertaining to the different ‘mind-sets’ between people born in different decades. Specifically, the difference between kids born in the mid-part of the Twentieth Century and those that came after. When I enquired after the source, I was told the origin was lost, overwritten in layers of forwarded emails.

At first glance, I guessed it'd been written by Brits (as they call us in the US), because of some of the products referred to, but a closer reading revealed it could only have originated from that magical land “Down Under.” And whether single-handedly or no, all I can say to my Australian cousins is:

“Good on you, mates! Thanks, for all the pointed reminders. More especially, thanks for the many laughs.”

The question deliberated upon: If conditions in the past were so very terrible, not to say, downright bloody dangerous, how on earth did anyone ever survive long enough for any of us to be here today?

Here, in its entirety, the riff on past versus present historical perspectives:

**“First, we survived being born** to mothers who smoked and/or drank while they carried us and lived in houses made of asbestos.

They took aspirin, ate blue cheese, tuna from a can, and didn't get tested for diabetes or cervical cancer.

Then after that trauma, our baby cribs were covered with bright coloured lead-based paints.

We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, doors, or cabinets and when we rode our bikes, we had no helmets or shoes, not to mention, the risks we took when hitch-hiking up and down the country or even abroad

As children, we would ride in cars with no seat belts or air bags.

Riding in the back of a Ute (ed: any vehicle with an open cargo area) on a warm day was always a special treat.

We drank water from the garden hose and NOT from a bottle.

Take away food was limited to fish and chips, no pizza shops, McDonald's, KFC, Subway or Red Rooster.

Even though all the shops closed at 6.00pm and didn't open on the weekends, somehow, we didn't starve to death!

We shared one soft drink with four friends, from one bottle and NO ONE actually died from this.

We could collect old drink bottles and cash them in at the corner store and buy 'Fruit Tingles' and crackers to blow up frogs with.

We ate cupcakes, white bread and real butter and drank soft drinks with sugar in it, but we weren't overweight because...

**WE WERE ALWAYS OUTSIDE PLAYING!!!**

We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back when the streetlights came on.

No one was able to reach us all day. And we were O.K.

We would spend hours building our go-carts out of scraps and then ride down the biggest hill we could find; only to find out we forgot the brakes! We built tree houses and cubby houses and played in creek beds with our 'Matchbox' cars.

We didn't have Playstations, Nintendo's, X-boxes; in fact we had no videogames, at all; no hundreds and hundreds of channels on cable, no video-taped movies, no 'surround sound', no mobile phones, no personal computers, no Internet or Internet chat rooms... **WE HAD FRIENDS** and we went outside and found them!

We fell out of trees, got cut, broke bones and teeth and there were no lawsuits from these accidents

Only girls had pierced ears!

We ate worms and mud pies made from dirt, and the worms did not live in us forever.

You could only buy Easter Eggs and Hot Cross buns at Easter time... No really!

We were given 'BB' guns and slingshots for our 10th birthdays.

We drank milk laced with Strontium 90 from cows that had eaten grass covered in nuclear fallout from the atomic testing at Maralinga in 1956.

We rode bikes or walked to a friend's house and knocked on the door or rang the bell, or just yelled for them!

Mum didn't have to go to work to help dad make ends meet!  
Football ("Footy") had try-outs and not everyone made the team. Those who didn't had to learn to deal with disappointment. Imagine that!!

Our teachers used to belt us with big sticks and leather straps and bullies always ruled the playground at school.

The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke the law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law!

Our parents got married before they had children and didn't invent stupid names for their kids like "Kiora" and "Blade."

This generation has produced some of the best risk-takers, problem solvers and inventors ever!

The past 70 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas.

We had freedom, failure, success, and responsibility. And what's more: we learned HOW TO DEAL WITH IT ALL!

And if YOU are one of the lucky kids who were born back in the 1930's and 40's or the 1950's, 60's and 70's! HUGE CONGRATULATIONS! YOU MADE IT!

And while you are at it, forward it to your kids so they will know how brave their parents were.

Kind of makes you want to run through the house with scissors, doesn't it!"

A good few of the Aussie author/s' cracking memories made me laugh and nod. They also started me very seriously pondering the differences between old and new norms, and the differing mind-sets that occur between different generations: the divides that, all too often, divide us.

One last quick point: Please put down any scissors before you even think of running around the house or anywhere else for that matter; even if you do immediately intend to run down to your doctors surgery to top up your or your kid's vaccinations. The latest offering from the UK's truly irreplaceable NHS, a "6-in-1" vaccine: the DTaP/IPV/Hib/Hep B vaccine, that helps provide protection against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, hepatitis B, polio and Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib); a real broad-spectrum doozy.

More's the joy.

PS: I, for one, never ate worms or mud pies, when I was nipper. Honest.

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