

Childhood Shots and Vaccines

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“Doctor Blodgett is coming today.” That is a statement, or something like it, that most mothers will never say to their offspring these days. But Dr. Blodgett, my mother’s childhood pediatrician, still made house calls throughout my early childhood.

I clearly remember my four year old self lying on the living room sofa and getting my first small pox vaccine. The doctor gave it to me on my upper thigh, explaining that, for a young lady, the scar would be less obvious there than getting it on my arm where all of my friends got theirs. He was apparently not anticipating the bikini era of my young adulthood.

Dr. Blodgett was a kind man who seemed ancient to me. After all, he must be really old if he treated my mother as a child! As it was, I was very sick as a result of getting the vaccine, being apparently very sensitive to ‘pocky’ (pox) problems.

Before the next Christmas I caught Chicken Pox. My best friend, Linda, was running around with chicken pox at their family Christmas party. She felt fine even though everyone knew she had it. Unfortunately I caught it. Saying that I was really, really sick is probably an understatement. I’m sure Dr. Blodgett made at least one visit when I got so sick, but I have

no memory of that. I have no idea what advice he gave to my mother. What I do remember was lying absolutely still because moving caused pain. I can picture lying in my 'six year' crib, which they kept until I was six! I just couldn't move. A couple of times my mother scooped me up and carefully carried me to her bed so that she could change the sheets on the crib. She says I screamed in pain during this maneuver. Any touch was painful.

As I said, this happened just before Christmas. My crib was next to a tall Mission glass-fronted bookcase. They had set a Christmas present up on top of that bookcase and I lay there for days staring at that package, wondering what it contained. I finally pulled myself up on the crib rail, got it down, and opened it. It was a "Little Lady" bottle of bubble bath nestled in a blue plastic bath tub. I didn't even get into trouble! My mother was just thrilled that I was finally able to accomplish this monumental feat.

Needless to say, I was covered with scabs and still have the remnants of scars from that illness. Busybodies would say to my mother "She must have scratched." My mother would reply, "Scratch! She couldn't move!"

When the shingles vaccine first came out, I figured I should get it right away, being so vulnerable to pox-type illnesses so I approached my physician and he didn't even know that is was

available yet. He sent his nurse searching and, sure enough, she located it in a refrigerator somewhere else in the clinic, so I know I was his very first patient to receive it!

Other childhood shots were much less eventful than smallpox. Of course there were no vaccines for measles and mumps, so we all had to suffer through that.

Polio was the big scarecrow in the closet at that time. Thanks to Dr. Salk though, we ultimately all lined up in school and received that vaccine. For me, that was before the sugar cube era so we waited in line for our shots. I don't remember anything interesting happening during this event. Much less dramatic than small pox.