

Getting Shots

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

Gary winced as he saw his brother get a shot in the arm. Shots were horrible things. They always brought out the largest needle they could find, and then they pumped you full of goo that made your arm hurt for three or four days. Shots were nearly as bad as getting blood drawn. Gross!

“Why do we need to get shots?” He wondered aloud as the nurse prepared his injection, setting it out carefully on a tray.

She smiled. “That’s a common question.” She squirted a little bit of the injection out into the air.

Gary shuddered. “So? What’s the answer then?”

She tapped the syringe. “These are vaccines in here. They prevent serious illnesses.”

“How?” Gary wasn’t impressed yet.

The nurse smiled. “Here’s how: vaccines contain weakened forms or dead forms of the viruses. When they are put into your body, your immune system reacts and goes into defensive mode.”

“What does that mean?”

“Well, your body makes special soldiers called antibodies to attack the viruses. The problem with antibodies is that they are designed to fight just a single type of virus. So, antibodies can’t help with every illness.”

“That seems silly.”

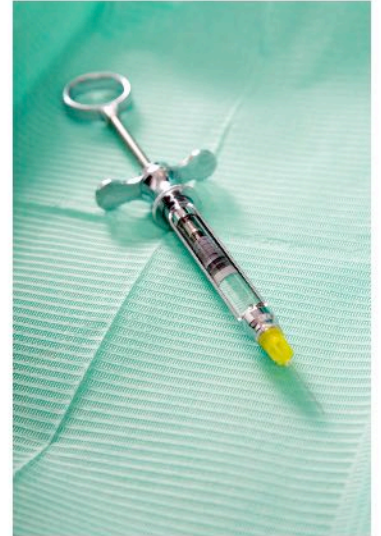
“It might, but they’re like machines that do one job really good, instead of a lot of jobs just sort of well. Anyway, once you have antibodies for a certain illness in you, there are always a few waiting on the benches to get called into duty if that disease tries to attack.”

“So getting shots makes antibodies which keep me safe from a disease.” Gary summarized.

“Yes, and you have many kinds of antibodies in your immune system. All these shots you get over the years add up. They protect you from all the worst diseases around. Sadly, you have to get the shots to make it work. That’s the trade-off.”

“I guess that’s not too bad of a price.”

“It’s a few days’ soreness to make you safe for a lifetime.”



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1. Where is Gary?
 - A. home
 - B. school
 - C. the park
 - D. the hospital

2. What is Gary afraid of?
 - A. colds
 - B. the flu
 - C. getting shots
 - D. nurses

3. What does the syringe contain?
 - A. vaccines
 - B. germs
 - C. medicine
 - D. water

4. What do antibodies do?
 - A. they kill bodies
 - B. they make you sick
 - C. they prevent diseases
 - D. none of the above

5. How does Gary feel about shots at the end of the story?
 - A. They're fun!
 - B. They're not great, but they have a good purpose.
 - C. They're even scarier.
 - D. They're okay.

Getting Shots – Answer Key

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