



HEALTH + ANALYSIS

Immunizations ... How they work

Contrary to popular belief, immunization involves more than getting a shot from a doctor's office. There's more that comes into play, especially in the building and protecting of your immunity to diseases.

So how exactly does the process of immunization affect your immune system?

According to Dr. Benson Yu Huang, Medical Director of

Laredo Specialty Hospital, to answer this question, you have to start on a smaller level.

"There are white blood cells in your body that have the job of protecting you from viral infections," Huang says. "When need be, these white blood cells join together to become a giant army of sorts to ward off any unwanted viruses or diseases."

Huang says once a virus has been defeated, some types of white blood cells "remember"

the virus and how to defeat it when it enters the body again. That's why dead or weakened strains of a disease are used when a vaccine is created.

"A vaccination gives the white blood cells a 'taste' of that specific virus so they know how to fight it off if it ever enters the body," Huang explains. "This can strongly affect an individual's immune system."

Additionally, living in a community where the majority of others get vaccinations is

even more beneficial.

"When the majority of a community receives vaccinations to a certain disease, it creates community or herd immunity," Huang says.

Community or herd immunity is when members of the community who are too young or too weak to receive the vaccine also receive protection from the disease because it's unlikely to spread through a group of people with immunity to the infection. Germs that

would normally travel quickly through a community can't travel as easily when enough people are vaccinated against a certain disease.

"If a person does get sick, it's harder for the disease to spread and less chance for it to cause an outbreak," Huang continues, "So vaccines aren't just important for you, but also for the people around you."

Laredo Specialty Hospital | Contributor

PA education program eyed for reopening

A meeting was held recently to discuss reopening a physician assistant education program at the Laredo Regional Campus of UT Health San Antonio. Gladys Keene, M.D., dean of the dean of the regional campus, hosted the meeting for members of the Feasibility Task Force. Prospective students could begin applying April 2020 for the planned June 2021 start date. The program could help improve the healthcare workforce in Webb County, which is designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area in Primary Care, according to the Health Resources and Services Administration.

