



How do you feel about chickenpox parties?

MARK SAWYER, MD: The problem with chickenpox parties and getting the chickenpox is although, in general, it's a relatively mild disease, some children get *very* severely ill. I actually saw a child die last year from the chickenpox in my hospital. So it's not as mild as people think it is.

MARY BETH KOSLAP-PETRACO, DNP(c), CPNP: You might be the lucky mom or dad or grandparent whose child or grandchild goes through the disease with absolutely no problems. But you also might be the unlucky parent or relative of a child who gets severely ill from chickenpox.

PAUL A. OFFIT, MD: There have been chickenpox parties where children have gone to the party, acquired chickenpox, and died from the disease. That's no party. The fact of the matter is that although chickenpox is not the routine killer that, say, measles was or *Haemophilus Influenzae* Type b (Hib) was or even, arguably, pneumococcus was, I mean, chickenpox every year before the vaccine was introduced in 1995, caused 10,000 hospitalizations and caused about 70 children to die.

MARY BETH KOSLAP-PETRACO, DNP(c), CPNP: One of our dear friends, their little girl developed chickenpox because the mom didn't think it was really necessary to vaccinate and this child developed a severe infection in her neck from the chickenpox and almost died because she was having difficulty breathing because there was so much swelling it moved her airway over.

PAUL A. OFFIT, MD: Now most times that you go to a chickenpox party and you get chickenpox you will survive that infection and you won't be hospitalized. But why would you ever take that chance given that you can get a vaccine that can safely and easily offer you roughly the same kind of immunity that you're going to get from a natural infection without having to pay the potential price of natural infection which can be death?