

Germ Catchers

Activity Guide

Learning Objectives:

- Vaccines prepare your body to recognize and remove harmful germs.
- Different vaccines prepare your body for different germs.

Version 1 – Large scale (for groups and/or large spaces)

Materials:

- Rope
- Head, arm, and leg cards
- Vaccine cards (red, yellow, blue, blank)
- Masking tape
- Large pom-poms
- (Optional) Large bowl or bin
- Open area of floor (such as a circle time rug)



Advance preparation:

Before using the activity for the first time, cut apart the vaccine card sheet into four individual cards.

What to do:

1. Create a “person” on the open area of floor:
 - Use the rope to define a large circle or oval shape for the body.
 - Place the head, arm, and leg cards in appropriate places along the outside of the oval. You may want to secure them to the floor with a piece of masking tape to keep them in place.
2. Introduce the concepts of germs and how vaccines help our bodies fight germs. You could do this by reading the story *Meet the Vaccines* (see the *Meet the Vaccines* read-aloud activity), or with a short discussion of these questions:
 - *Have you ever been sick? What did it feel like?*
 - *Have you heard the word “germs” before? (Germs are too tiny to see, but they can get inside us and sometimes make us sick)*
 - *What are some things we do to keep germs from making us sick? (Wash hands, etc.)*
 - *Have you ever gotten a vaccine from a doctor or nurse? What was it like?*
 - *Do you know why getting vaccines is important? (Vaccines are medicines that help our bodies fight off bad germs)*
3. Invite children to play a game about how vaccine shots help our bodies fight off bad germs. Introduce the “person” on the floor and give them a name together.
4. Ask the group to imagine that they are the person’s germ catchers that help fight off bad germs, so the person doesn’t get sick—and that means they need to be really, really small! Invite them to stand up tall and then crouch down smaller and smaller as they imagine getting small enough to fit inside the person. If your rope circle is large enough for the whole



group to comfortably stand inside, invite them to do so. Otherwise, have them stand around the outside edge.

- *If we are germ catchers, what do you think we should do? (Look for bad germs inside the body and catch them!)*
 - *There's lots of stuff inside a person's body. How will we know what the bad germs look like? (A vaccine will tell us!)*
5. Hold up one of the colored vaccine cards. Explain that the person will get a vaccine that tells his germ catchers (that's us!) what bad germs to look for. Use the card to act out giving an injection to the "arm" of the floor person.
 - *What color is the vaccine? What color germs should we watch out for?*
 - *If we see any of those germs, what should we do?*
 6. Scatter some pom-poms into the rope circle. Ask children to look for any that match the color of the vaccine card and "catch" them by picking them up and putting them into a bowl or pile outside of the rope circle.
 7. Repeat 1–2 more times, adding more pom-poms and asking children to "catch" any that match the vaccine card.
 8. Hold up a different colored vaccine card. Explain that Andre is getting another shot and act out giving the shot as before.
 - *What color is this vaccine? Which germs should we watch out for now?*
 9. Encourage children to find and remove any pom-poms of the new color. For older children, challenge them to look for both the previous color and the new one.
 10. Repeat with a third or fourth colored vaccine card as time and children's interest allow. Note: To represent additional colors, or combinations of colors, use the blank card and place example pom-pom(s) on top of the syringe image to indicate the color(s).

Adaptations:

1. Replace the pom-poms with blocks or other objects that differ by shape as well as color. Using the blank vaccine card and example blocks, have children "catch" germs of a certain shape or combination of shape and color, such as red triangles.
2. Invite children to take turns being the "doctor" and choosing the vaccine card to tell the germ catchers what to look for.

Version 2 – Small scale (for individuals and/or tabletop use)

Materials:

- Person outline sheet
- Vaccine cards (red, yellow, blue, blank)
- Small pom-poms
- (Optional) Bowl or bin

What to do:

1. Introduce the concepts of germs and how vaccines help our bodies fight germs. You could do this by reading the story *Meet the Vaccines* (see the *Meet the Vaccines* read-aloud activity), or with a short discussion of these questions:
 - *Have you ever been sick? What did it feel like?*
 - *Have you heard the word "germs" before? (Germs are too tiny to see, but they can get inside us and sometimes make us sick)*
 - *What are some things we do to keep germs from making us sick? (Wash hands, etc.)*
 - *Have you ever gotten a vaccine from a doctor or nurse? What was it like?*



- *Do you know why getting vaccines is important? (Vaccines are medicines that help our bodies fight off bad germs)*
2. Invite the child to play a game about how vaccines help our bodies fight off bad germs. Introduce the person outline sheet and give the person a name together.
 3. Ask the child to imagine that they are the person's germ catcher that helps fight off bad germs so the person doesn't get sick—and that means they need to be really, really small! Invite them to stand up tall and then crouch down smaller and smaller as they imagine getting small enough to fit inside the person.
 - *If you are a germ catcher, what do you think you should do? (Look for bad germs inside the body and catch them!)*
 - *There's lots of stuff inside a person's body. How will you know what the bad germs look like? (A vaccine will tell you!)*
 4. Hold up one of the colored vaccine cards. Explain that the person will get a vaccine that tells his germ catcher (that's you!) what bad germs to look for. Use the card to act out giving an injection to the "arm" of the person outline.
 - *What color is the vaccine? What color germs should you watch out for?*
 - *If you see any of those germs, what should we do?*
 5. Scatter some pom-poms into the person outline. Ask the child to look for any that match the color of the vaccine card and "catch" them by picking them up and putting them into a bowl or pile outside.
 6. Repeat 1–2 more times, adding more pom-poms and asking the child to "catch" any that match the vaccine card.
 7. Hold up a different colored vaccine card. Explain that the person is getting another vaccine and act out giving the injection as before.
 - *What color is this vaccine? Which germs should we watch out for now?*
 8. Encourage the child to find and remove any pom-poms of the new color. For older children, challenge them to look for both the previous color and the new one.
 9. Repeat with a third or fourth colored vaccine card as time and the child's interest allow. Note: To represent additional colors, or combinations of colors, use the blank card and place example pom-pom(s) on top of the syringe image to indicate the color(s).

What's going on:

COVID-19 vaccines give your body instructions to learn what the coronavirus looks like. Then your body breaks down the vaccine and flushes it out. If you catch the virus later, your body can recognize it and attack it right away. You're less likely to get seriously sick because your body is prepared.

This activity reinforces for young learners the idea that vaccines prepare your body to fight off harmful germs, and that different vaccines are needed for different kinds of germs.

Credits and rights:

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