

HEPATITIS B

McDonalds

The Complexity of Play Dates **The Struggle of Privacy vs. Prevention**

By Karen B.

He was flushed and laughing as he played with a new friend in the McDonald's play area, darting through the maze like a butterfly. His friend's mom and I shot watchful glances toward the ball pit as we began to get to know each other, feeling our way through our first arranged play date.

She happened to mention that she had not allowed her son to be vaccinated against diseases like hepatitis B or chicken pox.

My son appeared before me, wiping his nose on his sleeve. Blood.

Her face faded as the heat rose from my chest into my face and the sound of my heart pounding in my ears drowned out her voice.

I struggled to organize the thoughts that were flooding my brain. There was guilt for endangering her unvaccinated child, along with compassion and sadness for my innocent, vulnerable child.

I despised the virus that transformed me into a paranoid mother, reluctant to ignore the risk to his unvaccinated playmates, yet determined to protect my son's privacy and guard him against ignorant and unfair treatment at the hands of playmates and other parents.

The scream of frustration that welled up inside me was washed away by the warmth of little boy excitement as I hugged my son and handed him a napkin.

No, life isn't fair.

