**Ask Dr. Ty: Will early exposure to colds boost immunity?**

Dr. Tyeese Gaines

[http://www.nbcnews.com](http://www.nbcnews.com/) / updated 8/5/2012 9:15:01 AM ET

"I had my son in daycare for the three years leading up to his start in Kindergarten this fall," Cheryl G.McGrattan asks on Facebook. "He got every cold and virus that cycled through the class. I am told he will be more resilient and have good immunity in the years that follow. Is this truth or wishful thinking?"

There is actually some truth to this.

A child exposed to colds and viruses earlier in life will develop a stronger immune system and is less likely to become sick in his or her later years.

“Immunity is immunity,” explains Dr. Jordan S. Orange, chief of immunology, allergy and rheumatology at Texas Children’s Hospital. “When you get it, you have it. So, if you get it earlier, you’re going to be immune earlier.”

However, here’s the catch: there are actually hundreds of different cold viruses. For example, adenovirus -- one of many viruses that causes cough, congestion, pink eye and diarrhea -- has 54 different types.

So, while children may build up immunity to the two or three viruses they’ve been exposed to, there are still hundreds more that their immune systems have not yet encountered. Meaning, that child may get sick from the new viruses just like everyone else.

Some experts still say more exposure to germs is better. The use of hand sanitizers and excessive cleanliness are actually blamed for the increase in asthma, allergies and autoimmune disorders in a theory called the “hygiene hypothesis.”