

# Family Blames Vaccine For Son's Death

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Medical authorities recommend that every child be vaccinated against several diseases.

The shots are designed to keep children healthy, but one metro family wants you to know how much they can hurt.

Mark and Jo Womack had what they say was a perfectly healthy baby boy. Devan Womack was born on May 2, 1994, weighing 9 pounds and measuring 21 inches long.

He died on April 19, 2000; two weeks short of his sixth birthday.

"I can't hold him, I can't hear him laugh," Jo says.

"His dying probably wasn't as tough as it had been watching him go through the seizures," Mark says.

Devan's struggles began in September of his first year, Mark says.

"(Jo) let out a yell. 'Something's wrong. He's jerking,'" he says. "I'm sitting there holding him saying, 'See, he's fine. Everything's fine.' And then all of sudden he jerked and you could tell ... it just sent a chill."

The day before, Devan had his DPT shot, and Jo knew the possible side effects.

"The literature I read said in rare instances some children have long-lasting seizure," she says. "In parentheses it said over 30 minutes."

Devan's lasted 70 minutes, and left him with severe brain damage. Countless seizures followed.

"He had one the one week before Christmas, two in January," Mark says. Jo remembers going to the hospital every two to four weeks.

The Womacks believed that the DPT shot caused their son's illness. But they didn't understand why one of their children would survive, and another would not.

"For some it's a poison. For others it's not," Mark says. "No one seems to be clear on why some have a reaction and some don't."

Despite the seizures, Devan gave away much in his last year of life -- laughter to his parents and love to strangers. But the Womacks still feel that they were robbed; that they only got a glimpse of what could have been.

Devan's room remains as it was, filled with toys for a healthy boy alongside signs of sick child. The room has French doors near the bed, so that he could hear life in the other rooms.

"Someone said once (vaccines are) an acceptable risk. I can't buy that," Mark says. "I can't buy that because of what happened to mine."

The U.S. government has a fund for children who are injured by vaccines. The feds deny that the DPT shot caused Devan's death, but the government agreed to pay for part of his medical bills.

The Womacks say that in the future, they would wait until a child turned two years old to vaccinate.