

# Business



Up Close Dr. Amy Baxter, pain specialist

# 'Lives have been changed' by Buzzy

Doctor/mom invents 'bee' to help ease pain of kids getting shots.

By **Ann Hardie**  
For the AJC

Personally speaking, Dr. Amy Baxter has a high tolerance for pain. But she has a low threshold when it comes to seeing kids in pain, especially her own.

In 2006, Baxter, 41, an expert in pain management, invented Buzzy, a cute plastic bee that uses a combination of cold and vibration to blunt the sting of shots. Buzzy also can be used to lessen the pain and trauma of IVs in hospitals, as well as cuts, stings and splinters that require treatment at home.

The National Institutes of Health recently awarded Baxter a \$1 million grant to study Buzzy's effectiveness in children ages four months through the teenage years. In September, Kimberly-Clark named her a recipient of a \$15,000 "MomInspired" grant to help pollinate the use of Buzzy. Buzzy costs \$34.95 and can be found at [buzzy4shots.com](http://buzzy4shots.com)

**Q: Were you afraid to go to the doctor when you were little?**

**A:** No, I loved going and liked watching shots go in. Even

made them let me watch when I had pins put in my broken leg, and when I had my wisdom teeth out. Some of us are odd that way.

**Q: Why did you invent Buzzy?**

**A:** Every time I took my son, who was four at the time, to the doctor, he would throw up. I was appalled that I was a physician and I still couldn't protect my kid from having a scarring experience around shots.

**Q: How does Buzzy work?**

**A:** There are frozen wings under the plastic Buzzy - it has a vibrator in it. Most of the numbing comes from the cold.

**Q: Couldn't you just use ice?**

**A:** There is some synergy between the natural pain relief of cold and vibration. The combination is better than either alone. Adding distraction makes you not notice the needle at all. In addition, we created hidden-picture distraction cards with questions on the back to augment Buzzy's effectiveness.

**Q: Do you have to be a physician to buy it?**

**A:** No. I wanted something that any mom or anyone afraid of shots could get to protect themselves or their child without having to rely on the health care



## Meet Amy Baxter

**Title:** CEO, MMJ Labs; Director of Emergency Research, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at Scottish Rite

**Expertise:** Pain management and procedural sedation

**Age:** 41

**Family:** Married, three children ages 13, 10, 8

**Hometown:** Lexington, Ky.

**Currently resides in:** Lake Claire neighborhood, Atlanta

**Education:** Yale University; Emory University School of Medicine

**Favorite fictional doctor:** Hawkeye Pierce from "MASH"

**Favorite real doctor:** Dr. Arash Babaooff at Cincinnati Children's Hospital who treats children worldwide with cleft lips and palates.

**Favorite book:** "The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress," by Robert A. Heinlein

**Hobbies:** Cooking Asian, Indian and Mexican cuisines; taking beer classes at The Porter Beer Bar in Little 5 Points

system. Right now it is available only over the Internet.

**Q: Why did it take till now to invent Buzzy?**

**A:** The number of shots has risen exponentially over the past decade. Children now get more than 20 shots by the time they're two. Research has shown that people develop needle phobia around age of 4-to-5, which of course is when kids get four or five shots in one day. There is a very real fear in medical circles that kids are getting so many shots now that there will be more vaccine refusals, more needle phobia and public health concerns as this crop of children grows older.

**Q: Did it take a mom to create this kind of invention?**

**A:** We were turned down repeatedly for an NIH grant and by big Pharma because the men discussing the project said, "Kids' pain isn't a big deal." They also said you couldn't have a successful company with a reusable product so I had to just do this myself.

**Q: Do you think health care professionals underestimate the effects of the pain they inflict on children?**

**A:** Only 20 percent of adults are affected by a fear of needles. Health care professionals are probably naturally less afraid

After all, we went into this profession. Add to that the tremendous amount of suffering we've seen in residency and in practice, and it does make sense that doctors don't understand why needle pain is a big deal.

**Q: Would Buzzy be good for fraidy-cat moms and dads, too?**

**A:** We're finding that adults who fear needles may actually feel pain more intensely. This would naturally result in them disliking needles more than someone who is relatively insensitive to needle pain. About three percent even faint, which is not a mental thing at all but a genetic response to significant sharp pain. We have a plain black one for adults - the Executive Buzzy.

**Q: What do you like most about your job?**

**A:** Hearing from people whose lives have changed because of Buzzy.

**Q: How do you like the title "entrepreneur"?**

**A:** I'm delighted with the title. Entrepreneurs are brave, smart, and increase the gross domestic product and global competitiveness of this country. One of the amazing, wonderful things about America is that you really aren't tied to the identity you're born with